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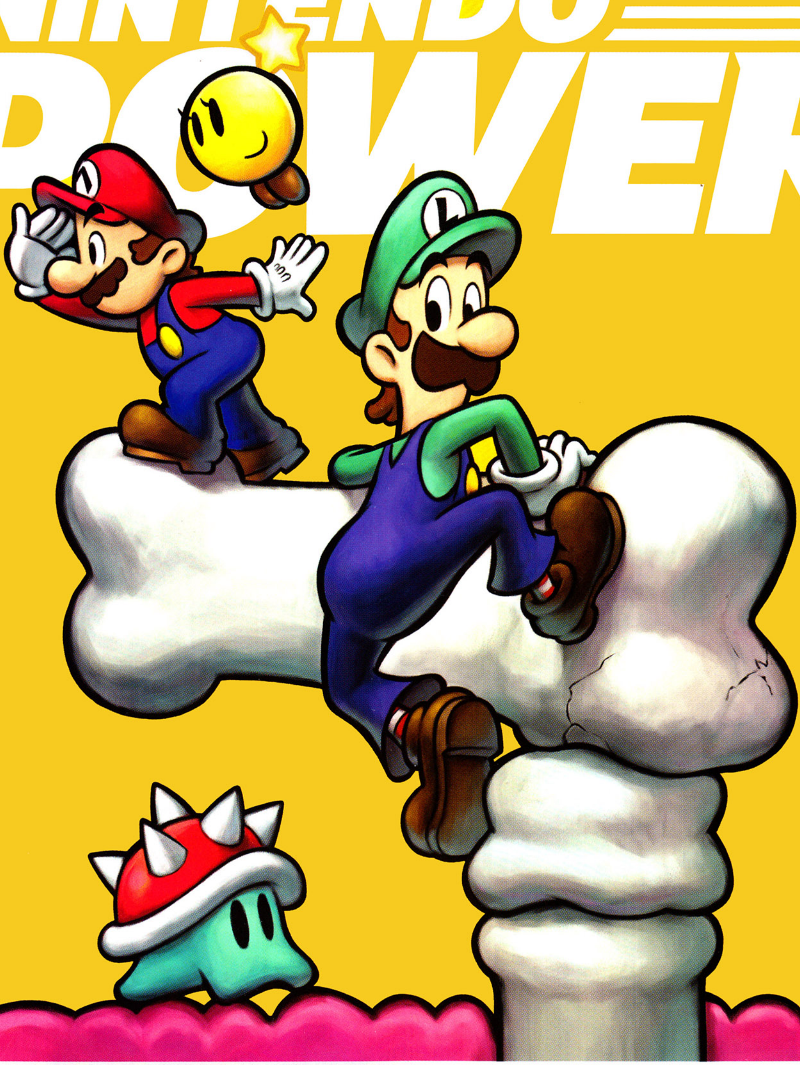

Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story
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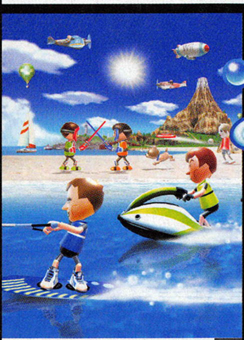

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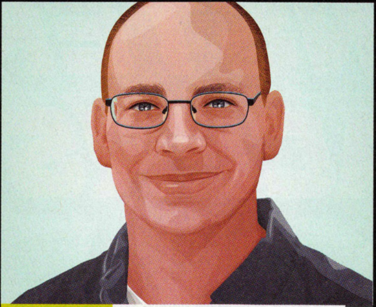

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DW = DSiWare
GB = GAME BOY
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

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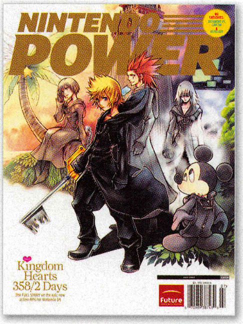
Pulse

Here-a We Go!

Chris Slate

Going into this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (yep, that's what E3 stands for), I knew of one upcoming Mario game (the previously announced Mario & Luigi sequel), I was hoping to see a second, and we ended up getting a third! Nintendo also revealed an amazing-looking new Metroid title for the Wii console and a long-overdue third Golden Sun RPG for the Nintendo DS system, plus let everyone play big upcoming games like The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks, Wii Sports Resort, and Sin and Punishment 2. And those were just the games from Nintendo! There was a slew of hot prospects from other publishers—way too many to mention here (although I'll give a shout-out to former NP cover games Silent Hill: Shattered Memories and Red Steel 2, both of which delivered big-time). So, did Nintendo "win" E3? Not exactly. I'd say that Nintendo *fans* were the show's biggest winners, hands-down.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**



V243 JULY 2009

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters from inside Bowser's belly. But first, this month's special letter request: how would you like to see games use Nintendo's new Wii Vitality Sensor accessory? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

ALL NP GET!

I finally did it: I have every issue of Nintendo Power ever published! I recently bought the very first issue—the last one needed to complete my collection—for a mere $30. I also have all four issues of Nintendo Power Advance, all six mini-issues of Pokémon Power, and the ever-so-rare Pocket Power, which people received when they went to see *The Wizard* in movie theaters. I also kept all the old comic series that were published in the magazines, from *Howard and Nester* to *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Ginji's Rescue Team*. So, as far as I know, my Nintendo Power collection is complete. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Finally, the Chosen One has awakened. NP staff, ready the airship!

THE BLOODY TRUTH?

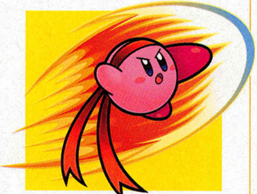
Why is it that girls aren't allowed to enjoy gory games like Resident Evil? I bought a black shirt and painted the Umbrella Corporation logo on it and touched it up with some red splats for blood. The next day, when I wore it, I got a ton of weird looks, even from people that I know for a fact love RE. Has sexism eliminated girl gamers from being cool? **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I'm all for equality in the game room, but maybe those funny looks were because you wore a shirt splatted with blood?

KIRBY QUESTIONS

I told my friend that Mr. Dream (from the NES Punch-Out!!) is listed as coming from Dreamland, and he brought up a good question: Is that the same Dreamland that Kirby is from? I need to know if the pink puff and the manly monstrosity are from the same place! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

My guess is no, but can you imagine what it would be like if they were neighbors? Or roommates? I sense a sitcom in the making.



Some people think that Kirby is in love with Jigglypuff. One of these people is me. When I turn on Brawl, I notice that there is just one person between these two, as if that person is a bodyguard. When the computer fights against me with Kirby and Jigglypuff, they never attack each other. This is a love from two different dimensions. Mario has Peach and Link has Zelda, but...Kirby and a Pokémon. This is something I never thought would happen. Help me, Nintendo Power. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Er, sorry—we're at a loss. Can *anyone* help this person? Please?

When I saw Vol. 243's coverage of Scribblenauts, I just about freaked! The way that you type in words to create tools for retrieving Starites seems awesome, and it's so cool how different objects react with each other! But I have a question: if sword + cow = meat, would sword + vegetables = salad? That would be healthy, yet cool!
—YOUNG ARTIST GIRL

We can't say for sure, but based on what we've seen so far, I wouldn't put it past the game to do this—we've yet to stump it!

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Word Association

PUNCH-OUT!! PRAISE

I knew that my history teacher bought a Wii for his daughter, and that he loved Mario Kart. I asked him if he'd tried the new Punch-Out!! and he said, "You know what? I remember playing the really old Punch-Out!! when I was around 12." I was extremely surprised, and we spent a little time talking about it. The funny thing was, I talked about the characters in the Wii version and he knew exactly who they were! He even gave me some good tips for taking down Bald Bull. Later he walked by my desk and said, "Soda Popinski... how many years has it been since I heard that name?"

Remade classic games aren't just fun and nostalgic; they bring different eras together!
—POSNECOV

During one of my many bouts with the second iteration of Bald Bull in the new Punch Out!!, something caught my attention. While resting between rounds, Doc Louis occasionally mentions that Little Mac should try arm-wrestling his opponent. I immediately thought back to the 1985 arcade game Arm Wrestling, in which Bald Bull makes a cameo as the mysterious Mask X. Do you guys think this was a nod to the obscure Nintendo title, or was it just random chocolate-bar-induced ramblings?
—MATTHEW L.

As often as Doc spews forth chocolate-bar-induced ramblings, this may not be one of them. When I interviewed the game's developers for Vol. 242, I learned that they have an exhaustive knowledge of the series' history and would almost certainly know about Arm Wrestling. We've also encountered other references in the game that show the creators really know their Nintendo!

A NICE MIDDLE GROUND

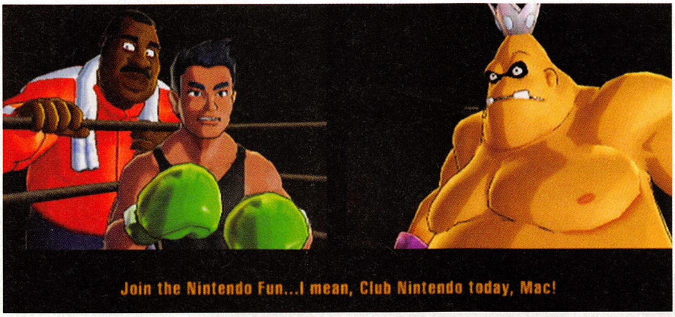
Some gamers relish new, realistic graphics while others prefer the 2-D style of the 8- and 16-bit days, but I have a special liking for the middle ground: N64. I have a peculiar fascination with 3-D worlds that have a low polygon count. Partially unidentifiable textures have a mysterious and alluring appeal, and the abstract shapes make the world feel especially magical and fantastical. For this reason, games like Super Mario 64, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, and Mario Kart 64 hold a special place in my heart. Nowadays, graphics are so realistic that you don't always get that feel, so let us remember the glory days of the N64. **—GORON OF LIGHT**

As you touch upon, art can be either realistic or abstract, and both types can be beautiful. Even on Wii, many games go for a stylized look to gain a certain effect.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

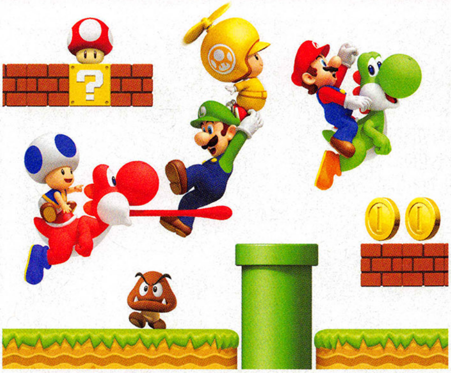
So, Hoffman, what's the deal with your crazy reviews? Or more accurately, one review in particular: Okami. You gave it a 7.5?! What the frack, Hoff? I am sure that no other reviewer has ever scored Okami under a 9, and there is a reason for that. Maybe it says something that the one magazine devoted to everything Nintendo gives an absolutely glorious game a lackluster score because they couldn't adjust to the game's new control scheme. Mm, fitting, isn't it? You've been warned, Hoffman!
—HOFF HASSLER PRO

The Hoff says: Thanks for the real timely letter there. I see what you're implying, but let me assure all our readers it's not true—Nintendo Power does not have and never has had a bias against wolves or canines of any type. On the other hand, that walking shark dude from Viewtiful Joe does kind of freak us out.



Join the Nintendo Fun...I mean, Club Nintendo today, Mac!

Punch-Out!! has lots of gags geared toward longtime Nintendo fans.



Four players at time, 80 new levels, new power ups, *and* Yoshi?! I am completely serious when I say that New Super Mario Bros. Wii could very well be the best video game ever made. **—PLAYER 2**

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF NINTENDO'S SHOWING AT E3?

This year's E3 was great for Nintendo compared to last year's show. It seemed as if Nintendo focused more on their hardcore fans, and I'm now excited for several new games. My only complaint is that there wasn't a new Zelda title shown for Wii. I thought for sure that, with the announcements of two new Mario games and a new Metroid, we would have surely seen a new Zelda. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

As soon as I heard about Metroid: Other M, I had to write to you guys. This game looks truly awesome! A third-person *and* first-person game in one? Truly remarkable! The cinema scenes are beautiful and look as if they could be mistaken for Final Fantasy! I think this will be the game that true Metroid fans have been waiting for. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

E3 was incredible this year! I was really surprised by Golden Sun DS. Golden Sun is my favorite series, and for the past six years, I never stopped believing that it would continue someday. Metroid: Other M also looks very cool, and Super Mario Galaxy 2 and New Super Mario Bros. Wii are going to be great. 2010 is going to be an amazing year for Nintendo. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I am overjoyed that Nintendo is developing Super Mario Galaxy 2, since the first one was my favorite game of all time. You can even use Yoshi! I'm very happy that Nintendo decided to do this, and I can't wait to see a preview of the game in the magazine! **—MAGGIE**

I was disappointed that Shigeru Miyamoto did not appear onstage at E3 this year, and that a new Wii Zelda game was not announced, but Spirit Tracks for the DS will be good. Super Mario Galaxy 2 and New Super Mario Bros. Wii have great potential. As for Wii Fit Plus, I say forget the yoga, I just want to play that minigame where you jump platforms and dodge cannon balls! Regarding the Wii Vitality Sensor, I'm sure using Wii to check your pulse is more exciting than it sounds. Without a doubt, the highlight of Nintendo's press conference was the new Metroid game. We may already know which title is going to win the Nintendo Power award for Best Overall Game of 2010. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

At first I thought, "Aw, another Super Mario Galaxy?" But then I saw the cool new stuff like Yoshi and said "Wow!" Also, since I don't have a DS, I was really pumped up to see New Super Mario Bros. on Wii with the four-player option. 2010, you may be a sweet year! **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I think that I am probably the only one who is excited about the E3 announcement of James Patterson Women's Murder Club: Games of Passion for Nintendo DS. I just finished playing Hotel Dusk and started looking for similar games, so I'm glad to see this new visual novel coming out. And it's by James Patterson?! That's even better! **—VAHH71106**

Apparently, most of you had your minds so blown by this year's show that you couldn't remember your own names! (Be sure to include those in your letters, folks!) But I can sympathize. As the world's biggest Mario fan (yep, it's official), I haven't been able to say much more than "Muhh..." since the press conference. I want a Yoshi ride *now*!

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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GOOMBAS

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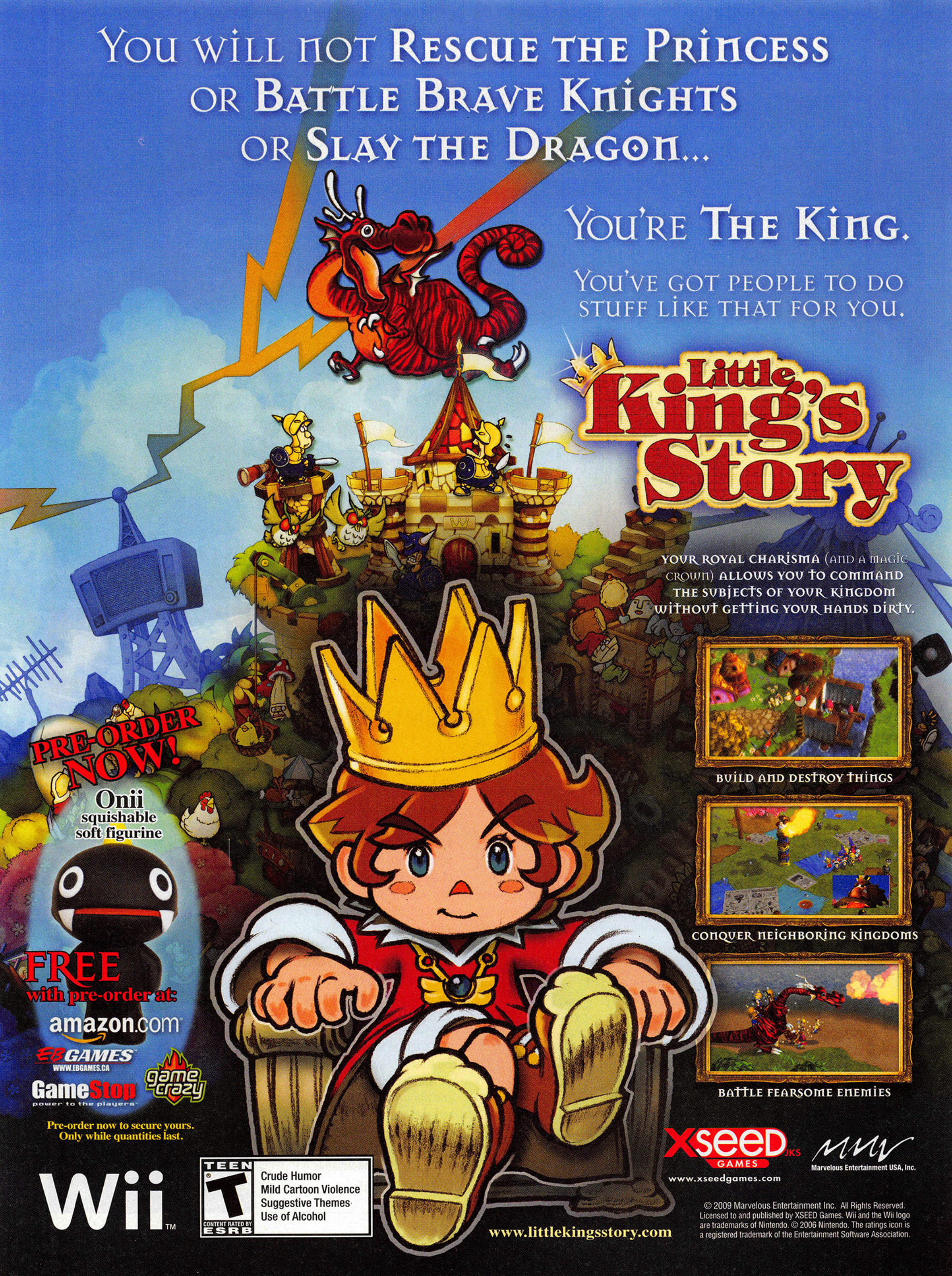

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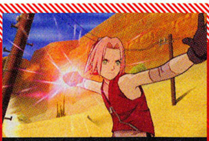
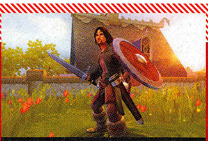
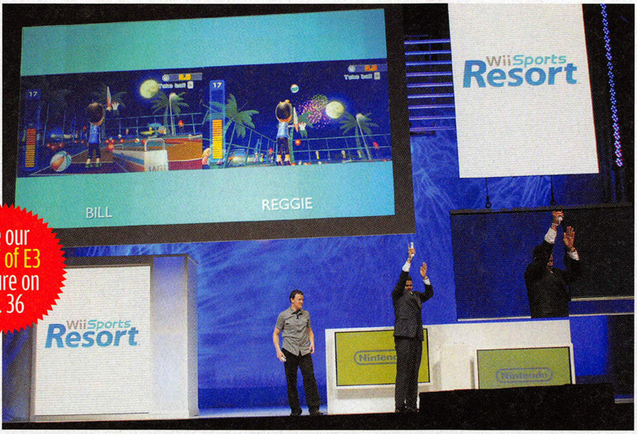

NARUTO'S ONE-TWO PUNCH

GRUDGE REPORT


THE ORIGINAL STRIDER



See our BEST of E3 feature on pg. 36

Wii VITALITY SENSOR

ENDLESS OCEAN 2

The Big Show

Nintendo welcomes back the real E3 with the company's most impressive lineup in recent memory.

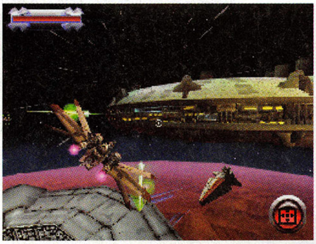
After last year's sorry, zombie-like excuse for an Electronic Entertainment Expo, the video game industry had two options: A) put the show out of its misery, or B) go back to the glitz and glamour of the good ol' days. Having returned from a whirlwind week of gaming madness in Los Angeles, we couldn't be happier that they went with B.

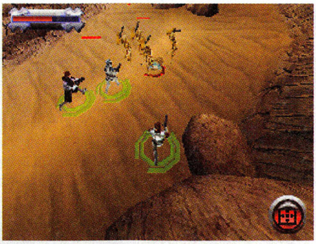
It was also a return to form for Nintendo, which answered its critics with tons of new titles for serious and casual gamers alike. The company's full list of announcements for the Wii console comprised Endless Ocean 2, Line Attack Heroes, Metroid: Other M, Monado: Beginning of the World, New Super Mario Bros. Wii, Span Smasher, Super Mario Galaxy 2, Wii Fit Plus, and an all-new (as-yet-untitled) installment of The Legend of Zelda. Also unveiled for the first time was the Wii Vitality Sensor, a new peripheral that can measure your pulse. Additional details, including the sensor's release date and how it might be implemented in games, were not divulged. For the Nintendo DS handheld, the big N introduced Fossil Fighters, Glory of Heracles, Golden Sun DS, Picross 3D, Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky, Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box, Style Savvy, and WarioWare DIY. Both platforms received plenty of love from third parties, as well. For full impressions and highlights, check out our 12-page Best of Show feature on page 36. **—STEVE T.**

SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2

WARIOWARE DIY

Leucos
Attack
Magic
Skills
Items
Escape
Wait
Fall Back
Auto
GLORY OF HERACLES



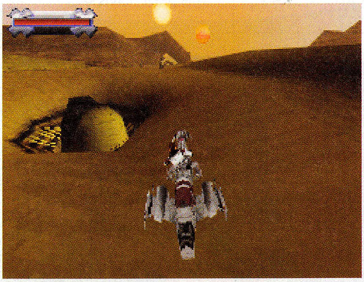


Battlefront Unleashed

LucasArts attempts the impossible—cramming colossal war zones onto the Nintendo DS with **Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron**.

In Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron, you'll take part in massive battles while on foot, in ground vehicles, in the air, and even in the vastness of space. The catch? All this happens in real time, with no break in the action.

If all that sounds a bit too much for the dual-screened system to handle, know that developer n-Space has already proven their exceptional technical prowess on Nintendo's handheld with titles such as Call of Duty: World at War and Star Wars: The Force Unleashed. That said, this DS version has been scaled back some compared to previous Star Wars Battlefront games on other consoles, most noticeably in its support of only four players during skirmishes.



Still, there's a lot of Star Wars jammed into Elite Squadron, including a Heroes and Villains mode that lets you play characters ranging from Luke Skywalker to Darth Maul, a wide variety of signature vehicles to pilot, as well as the inclusion of iconic Star Wars locations such as Tatooine, Endor, and Hoth. The game's fall release is still a ways off, but something tells us the Force is strong with this one. —**KAISER H.**

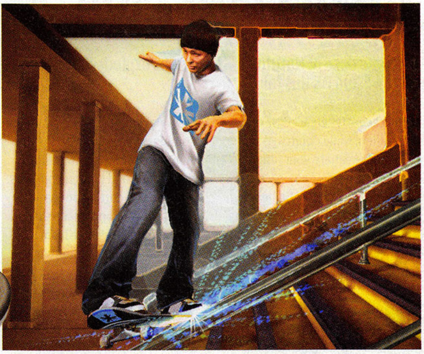
Road 'Hog

Not to be outdone by his mustachioed rival, the Blue Blur will headline his own kart racer early next year in the exhaustingly titled **Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing**. Hitting the tarmac on both Wii and DS, the game's roster consists of characters from throughout Sega's illustrious catalog, including Tails, Dr. Robotnik, AiAi, Amigo, and, of course, Sonic himself. (A couple of the other participants will make long-time Sega fans very happy, but we've been sworn to secrecy for now.) Likewise, you'll be competing on an assortment of Sega-themed tracks, such as Billy Hatcher's Blizzard Castle. Mario Kart-style power-ups and an aerial-trick system should add some panache to the festivities. —**STEVE T.**

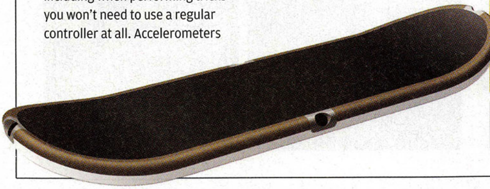
Get on Board

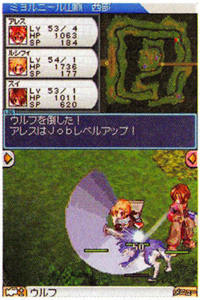
The legendary skateboard series gets decked out in **Tony Hawk: Ride** for Wii.

Tony Hawk fans have finally gotten their wish—the newest installment of the venerable series will feature a full-size skateboard peripheral. You'll control your skater exclusively via foot gestures, including when performing tricks—you won't need to use a regular controller at all. Accelerometers in the board will recognize when you shift your balance with your feet, and motion sensors on the tips and each side of the board will detect grabs. Activision hopes this intuitive control system will bridge the gap between serious gamers and casual fans looking to practice their kickflips at a party. All the news now is about the peripheral—we'll be sure to have details on the latest skaters and locales when they are announced. —**CHRIS SH.**



Screens for Tony Hawk: Ride were unavailable at press time, but we can only hope they're as sparktastic as this artwork.





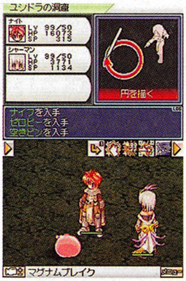
Ragnarok Online DS marks the franchise's first appearance on a dedicated game platform.

RO and Behold

XSEED is putting the popular PC RPG **Ragnarok Online** in the palm of your hand.

Ragnarok Online began as a Korean comic series, but is better known for the free massively multiplayer PC RPG it inspired. RO has won millions of fans in dozens of countries, leading GungHo Games (who runs it in Japan) to release a version for the Nintendo DS. Now XSEED plans to bring that game stateside by year's end.

Ragnarok Online DS drops the massively multiplayer aspects of the PC original, focusing instead on the adventures of a hero named Ares and his shaman companion, Shiera. But the game does use an open-ended class system like the PC version (including two DS-exclusive classes), so players will be free to guide Ares's development as they choose. In addition to playing the lengthy solo adventure, players can team up with up to two friends to challenge the Tower of Mirages, a randomly generated 50-story tower designed specifically for co-op adventuring. —**CASEY L.**



Needlework

With rock music thoroughly covered by Guitar Hero, Activision is looking to branch out into the worlds of dance, hip-hop, and electronica with **DJ Hero**. The new game features a turntable controller that lets you scratch your way through a huge assortment of rump-shakin' tracks from the likes of Beastie Boys, Gorillaz, and DJ Shadow. And when you really want to mix it up, plug in a Guitar Hero axe to perform some turntable-and-guitar duets. Get your groove on with DJ Hero later this year. —**CHRIS SH.**

Jutsu Fight Club

A double dose of **Naruto** fighting games explodes onto Wii and DS this fall.

If the recently released Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4 didn't quite satiate your jutsu appetite, fret not: two new Naruto Shippuden games will be heading exclusively to Nintendo platforms this fall—one for the DS and one for Wii—courtesy of longtime Naruto publisher Tomy.

Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2 for the Nintendo DS is a fully loaded sequel to 2007's cel-shaded fighting game Ninja Destiny. Featuring more than 30 playable characters, a new single-player Quest mode, and wireless multiplayer battles, Ninja Destiny 2's biggest draws will be the new Shippuden story arc, costumes, characters, and jutsu techniques.

Wii is also getting another iteration of a popular cel-shaded Naruto game, this one from the Clash of Ninja Revolution series. Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3 features the newer Shippuden look and moves, as well as the requisite 30-plus characters to play and 40 arenas—of which nine are new—to fight in. Additionally, Clash of Ninja Revolution 3 introduces online multiplayer to the series, which should please Naruto fans and fighting-game fans alike. We'll have more on these two titles in the coming months. Believe it! —**KAISER H.**

DS
83
33 Hit
1/2

Grudge Match

Alert the UN—the deadly curse of **JU-ON: The Grudge** is spreading to Western shores.

In our June issue we reported that AQ Interactive, Feelplus, and film director Takashi Shimizu were conspiring to make a Wii horror game out of Shimizu's JU-ON: The Grudge franchise. Now XSEED has joined the party, grabbing the rights to spread the curse throughout North America in October, just in time for Halloween.

Titled simply JU-ON: The Grudge, the Wii game has little in common with conventional survival-horror adventures like Silent Hill. Instead, its creators have dubbed it a "haunted-house simulator," which revolves around disturbing imagery and sudden scares instead of puzzles and combat. Players explore from a first-person perspective, using the Wii Remote controller as a flashlight to illuminate the dark corners of such horror-staple settings as abandoned hospitals and mannequin factories. JU-ON: The Grudge even has a twisted multiplayer mode in which one player runs the house, triggering preset scares on their own remote to torment their friends. —**CASEY L.**

Bowled Move

Tecmo gives its flagship sports franchise a casual-gamer makeover, transforming the planned Wii revival of Tecmo Bowl into **Family Fun Football**.

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04:52
Kick Off
0
Quasars
Toros
19 Yard Gain On The Play

Long known for its simple take on a complex sport, Tecmo Bowl led the trend of pick-up-and-play sports gaming. The name, though, may not be familiar to many of those looking for a Wii Sports-style football experience, so Family Fun Football is set to fill the slot originally intended for Tecmo Bowl. A simple playbook and gesture-based controls are expected, but what may surprise players acquainted with Tecmo Bowl is how far this new game runs from the original title's NFL-lite premise. Ten teams, each with strengths and weaknesses, compete in five stadiums that range from the standard gridiron to a space-based arena. In addition to power-up-enhanced football players, mascots and Mii characters mix it up. With EA backing away from its All-Play experiment, Tecmo may find the field wide open for Family Fun this fall. —**GEORGE S.**

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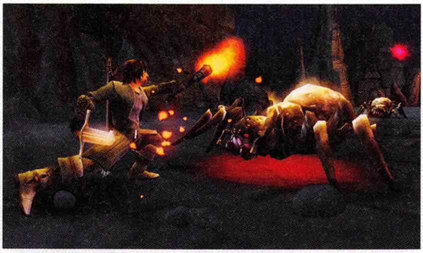
The Return of the King

Relive Aragorn's greatest exploits in first-ever **Lord of the Rings** adventure for Wii.

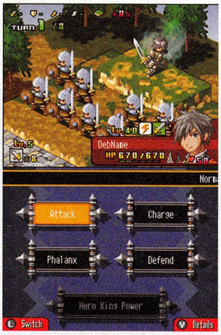
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest opens just after the film and novel trilogy ends, with Mayor Samwise Gamgee preparing a grand Hobbiton party for the visiting King Aragorn. That party provides the framing device for an original take on the Lord of the Rings concept, which cuts out all the dull parts to focus on the action-packed adventures of Aragorn's ranger days. Players will wield swords, bows, and spears as they battle Ringwraiths and giant spiders, and even run down orcs on horseback. Aragon's Quest is firmly focused on its titular hero, but that doesn't mean he'll have to fight alone; a second player can pick up a Wii Remote at any time to step into the robes of the wizard Gandalf. Taking a page from Super Mario Galaxy, the second player will have a lesser role, casting spells to protect the first player as Aragorn leads the mission.

Aragorn's Quest is being developed by Headstrong Games, who has already proven their Wii mettle with The House of the Dead: Overkill. We're thrilled to see what they can do with The Lord of the Rings, even if their publisher's quest for a family-friendly rating will force them to go a bit easier on the F-bombs this time around. —CASEY L.



Classic Tactics

Originally developed by Japan's GungHo Software, **Hero's Saga Laevatein Tactics** mixes a Luminous Arc-style isometric battlefield with a squad-based combat system. Players can recruit over 100 characters to their cause, and determine their classes by equipping each with one of 150 different weapons. In addition to leading the army of young prince Ernesto through a lengthy single-player campaign, players can fire up the wireless capabilities of their DS handhelds to engage in multiplayer battles with up to three friends or to swap rare weapons and units. If you can remember how to spell it, you should be able to track down a copy of Laevatein later this year. —CASEY L.



GAME WATCH

forecast

Wii		
101-in-1 Party Megamix	Atlus	FALL 09
Academy of Champions	Ubisoft	9/09
Active Life: Extreme Challenge	Namco Bandai	SUM 09
All Star Cheer Squad 2	THQ	FALL 09
Arc Rise Fantasia	XSEED	WIN 09
Army Rescue	UFO	8/09
Astro Boy: The Video Game	D3Publisher	10/09
ATV: Quad Kings	Zoo	8/09
Bakugan Battle Brawlers	Activision	10/09
Band Hero	Activision	11/09
The Beatles: Rock Band	MTV Games	9/09
Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks	D3Publisher	10/09
The Biggest Loser	THQ	FALL 09
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	FALL 09
Brave: A Warrior's Tale	SouthPeak	8/09
Build-A-Bear Workshop: Friendship Valley	The Game Factory	10/09
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	Activision	9/09
Cabela's Outdoor Adventures 2010	Activision	9/09
Cars Race-O-Rama	THQ	FALL 09
Chaotic	Activision	11/09
Charm Girls Club: Pajama Party	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Ubisoft	9/09
Cursed Mountain	Deep Silver	Q3 09
Daisy Fuentes Pilates	Sega	SUM 09
Dance Dance Revolution	Konami	FALL 09
Dead Space Extraction	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Deca Sports 2	Hudson	FALL 09
Def Jam Rapstar	4mm	2009
DiRT 2	Codemasters	9/09
Disney Sing It: Pop Hits	Disney	FALL 09
DJ Hero	Activision	FALL 09
Dodge Racing: Charger vs. Challenger	Zoo	11/09
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	Namco Bandai	FALL 09
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	THQ	FALL 09
Dreamworks Madagascar Kartz	Activision	10/09
EA Sports Active—Expansion Pack 1	Electronic Arts	HOL 09
Endless Ocean 2: Beautiful Ocean	Nintendo	Q1 10
Family Fun Football	Tecmo	FALL 09
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	10/09
FIFA Soccer 10	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	Q4 09
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	WIN 09
Food Network: Cook or Be Cooked	Namco Bandai	FALL 09
Fragile: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	XSEED	WIN 09
Geon Cube*	UFO	10/09
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	Electronic Arts	8/09
Gladiator A.D.	TBA	TBA
Go Play City Sports	Majesco	8/09
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Groovin' Blocks	Zoo	8/09
Guitar Hero 5	Activision	9/09
The Hardy Boys: The Hidden Theft	Dreamcatcher	2009
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	Natsume	9/09
Hasbro Family Game Night 2	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Hot Wheels: Battle Force 5	Activision	11/09
iCarly	Activision	10/09
Jakers! Let's Explore	Graffiti	Q3 09
Jambo! Safari Animal Rescue	Sega	WIN 09
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	Ubisoft	HOL 09
Jillian Michaels' Fitness Ultimatum 2010	Majesco	FALL 09
Ju-on: The Grudge	XSEED	10/09
Just Play for Fun*	UFO	9/09
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	FALL 09
The Legend of Zelda*	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	LucasArts	FALL 09
LEGO Rock Band	Warner Bros.	WIN 09
Line Attack Heroes	Nintendo	TBA
Littlest Pet Shop Friends	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Madden NFL 10	EA Sports	8/09
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	10/09
Marvel Super Hero Squad	THQ	FALL 09
Metroid: Other M	Nintendo	2010
Metroid Prime Trilogy	Nintendo	8/09
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	FALL 09
Monado: Beginning of the World	Nintendo	TBA
Monster Mayhem: Build and Battle	Crave	8/09
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	Ignition	9/09
My Baby 2	SouthPeak	11/09
MySims Agents	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	Tomy	Q3 09
Need for Speed Nitro	Electronic Arts	11/09
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	Nintendo	HOL 09
No More Heroes: Desperate Struggle	Ubisoft	Q1 10
Our House: Party!	Majesco	10/09
Pacific Liberator	Zoo	8/09
Partii Time*	Konami	FALL 09
Pizza Boy	Majesco	2009
Planet 51	Sega	WIN 09
Play the World	DreamCatcher	Q2 09
Pop'n Music	Konami	FALL 09
The Princess and the Frog	Disney	FALL 09
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rabbids Go Home	Ubisoft	10/09
Rapala: We Fish	Activision	8/09
Real Heroes: Firefighter	Conspiracy	Q2 09
Red Steel 2	Ubisoft	WIN 09
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	Capcom	WIN 09
Resident Evil Archives: Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	WIN 09
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus	2K Play	FALL 09
Rock Blast	UFO	9/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Saint	UFO	8/09
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	NIS America	11/09
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	2009
Scooby-Doo: First Frights!	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
The Secret Saturdays: Beasts of the 5th Sun	D3Publisher	10/09
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	Ubisoft	11/09
Shiren the Wanderer	Atlus	FALL 09

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	Konami	FALL 09
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	Q1 10
Sled Shred	SouthPeak	11/09
Smart Kid's Journey to Adventure	UFO	11/09
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	Q1 10
Span Smasher	Nintendo	TBA
Spectrobes: Origins	Disney	FALL 09
SpongeBob's Truth or Square	THQ	FALL 09
Spore Hero	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Spyborgs	Capcom	2009
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	9/09
Story Hour Adventures	Zoo	2009
Story Hour Fairy Tales	Zoo	2009
The Strike	Psyclone/XS Games	9/09
Super Mario Galaxy 2	Nintendo	2010
Sushi Go Round	SouthPeak	Q4 09
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	Capcom	WIN 09
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash Up	Ubisoft	9/09
Tony Hawk: Ride	Activision	2009
Toy Story Mania!	Disney	FALL 09
Ultimate Party Challenge	Konami	FALL 09
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	XSEED	9/09
Wacky World of Sports	Sega	FALL 09
We Cheer 2	Namco Bandai	FALL 09
Wii Fit Plus	Nintendo	FALL 09
Wii Sports Resort	Nintendo	7/09
World of Zoo	THQ	FALL 09
Your Shape	Ubisoft	WIN 09
Zephyr: Rise of the Elementals	Konami	FALL 09
NINTENDO DS		
Academy of Champions	Ubisoft	2009
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	Capcom	1/10
Again: Eye of Providence	Tecmo	SPR 09
Agatha Christie: The ABC Murders	Dreamcatcher	2009
All Star Cheer Squad 2	THQ	FALL 09
Ant Nation	Konami	SUM 09
Astro Boy: The Video Game	D3Publisher	10/09
Bakugan Battle Brawlers	Activision	10/09
Balloon Pop DS	UFO	11/09
Barbie 3-Musketeers	Activision	10/09
Battles of Giants: Dragons	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Ben 10 Alien Force: Vilgax Attacks	D3Publisher	10/09
The Biggest Loser	THQ	FALL 09
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	Sega	FALL 09
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Brave: Shaman's Challenge	SouthPeak	8/09
Build-A-Bear Workshop: Welcome to Hugsville	The Game Factory	9/09
Cake Mania 3	Majesco	2009
Cars Race-O-Rama	THQ	FALL 09
Chaotic	Activision	FALL 09
Charm Girls Club: My Fashion Mall	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Charm Girls Club: My Fashion Show	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Charm Girls Club: My Perfect Prom	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Cheer We Go	Natsume	9/09
Chocolatier	Zoo	11/09
A Christmas Carol	Disney	FALL 09
The Clique: Diss and Make up	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs	Ubisoft	9/09
Cooking Mama 3	Majesco	HOL 09
C.O.P. The Recruit	Ubisoft	HOL 09
Crime Scene	SouthPeak	12/09
Dawn of Heroes	Majesco	Q3 09
de Blob	THQ	Q2 09
Dementium II	SouthPeak	2/10
Diner Dash: Flo on the Go	Zoo	11/09
DiRT 2	Codemasters	9/09
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
DJ Star	Deep Silver	Q3 09
Dodge Racing: Charger vs. Challenger	Zoo	10/09
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	Namco Bandai	FALL 09
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Drama Queens	Majesco	SPR 09
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	THQ	FALL 09
Dream Chronicles	Zoo	11/09
Dreamworks Madagascar Kartz	Activision	10/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	2009
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	10/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	2009
Dungeon Raiders	Focus Home Interactive	SUM 09
Fast Food Panic	SouthPeak	10/09
FIFA Soccer 10	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Fossil Fighters	Nintendo	8/09
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	Electronic Arts	8/09
Glory of Heracles	Nintendo	2010
Golden Sun DS	Nintendo	2010
The Hardy Boys: Treasure on the Tracks	Sega	FALL 09
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	Natsume	8/09
Hasbro Family Game Night 2	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Hot 'n' Cold	Majesco	2009
Hot Wheels: Battle Force 5	Activision	11/09
House M.D.	Legacy	HOL 09
iCarly	Activision	10/09
Imagine Artist	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Imagine Detective	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Imagine Salon Stylist	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Imagine Soccer Captain	Ubisoft	8/09
Imagine Teacher: Class Trip	Ubisoft	8/09
Imagine Zookeeper	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Infinite Space	Sega	2009
Jambo! Safari	Sega	Q4 09
James Patterson Women's Murder Club: Games of Passion	THQ	FALL 09
Jillian Michaels' Pocket Trainer 2010	Majesco	FALL 09
Jonas	Disney	Q3 09
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	Square Enix	FALL 09
Last King of Africa	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	Nintendo	HOL 09
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	LucasArts	FALL 09
LEGO Rock Band	Warner Bros.	WIN 09
Littlest Pet Shop: Beach Friends	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Littlest Pet Shop: City Friends	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Littlest Pet Shop: Country Friends	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	Nintendo	FALL 09
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	10/09
Marvel Super Hero Squad	THQ	FALL 09
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	Ubisoft	8/09
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	FALL 09
Monster Mayhem: Build and Battle	Crave	8/09
Monster Racers	Koei	8/09
Moomin: The Mysterious Howling	Graffiti	Q3 09
Moto Racer	SouthPeak	9/09
MX vs. ATV Reflex	THQ	Q4 09
My Baby 2	SouthPeak	11/09
My Hero Astronaut	Majesco	8/09
My Hero Firefighter	Majesco	8/09
MySims Agents	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	Tomy	9/09
Need for Speed Nitro	Electronic Arts	11/09
Nostalgia	Ignition	9/09
Our House	Majesco	10/09
Petz Dogz Talent Show	Ubisoft	HOL 09
Petz Hamsterz Superstarz	Ubisoft	HOL 09
Petz Nursery	Ubisoft	HOL 09
Phantasy Star Ø	Sega	FALL 09
Picross 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Planet 51	Sega	WIN 09
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	Nintendo	FALL 09
Prank Your Neighbor	Dreamcatcher	TBA
Press Your Luck 2010	Ubisoft	9/09
The Princess and the Frog	Disney	FALL 09
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	Nintendo	8/09
Puzzle Chronicles	Konami	WIN 09
Ragnarok Online DS	XSEED	WIN 09
Reversal Challenge	UFO	8/09
Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus	2K Play	FALL 09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Samantha Swift and the Hidden Roses of Athena	MumboJumbo	10/09
Sands of Destruction	Sega	Q1 10
Scooby-Doo: First Frights!	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Scribblenauts	Warner Bros.	FALL 09
Secret Flirts	SouthPeak	12/09
The Secret Saturdays: Beasts of the 5th Sun	D3Publisher	10/09
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	SUM 09
Smart Boy's Gameroom 2	UFO	9/09
Smart Girl's Playhouse 2	UFO	9/09
Smart Kid's Mega Game Mix	UFO	9/09
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	Sega	Q1 10
Space Invaders Extreme 2	Square Enix	9/09
SpongeBob's Truth or Square	THQ	FALL 09
Spore Hero Arena	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
Squishy Tank	Natsume	9/09
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	LucasArts	FALL 09
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	9/09
Style Lab: Jewelry Design	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Style Lab: Makeover	Ubisoft	FALL 09
Style Savvy	Nintendo	HOL 09
Tinker Bell and the Lost Treasure	Disney	FALL 09
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	Q4 09
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	Q4 09
WarioWare D.I.Y.	Nintendo	TBA
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wedding Dash	Zoo	11/09
WireWay	Konami	FALL 09
A Witch's Tale	NIS America	FALL 09
Wizards of Waverly Place	Disney	SUM 09
World of Zoo	THQ	FALL 09
Zenses: Zen Garden	The Game Factory	9/09

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH. *TENTATIVE TITLE NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

BITS of TID

I Say, My Boy!

Henry Hatsworth and World of Goo creators team up.

Internet rumors have been swirling about a collaboration between 2D Boy (the team behind World of Goo) and Kyle Gray (producer of Henry Hatsworth and the Puzzling Adventure). So what's the story? Though Gray isn't actually joining 2D Boy, he is partnering with one of its members, Kyle Gabler, along with fellow World of Goo programmer Allan Blomquist, to work on an experimental new game they hope to bring to WiiWare. 2D Boy, meanwhile, has a separate new project in the works. **—CHRIS H.**

Return Bout

Step into the ring once more with **WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010**.

THQ has been delivering quality wrestling games on an annual basis for more than a decade, so it's no surprise that the company has announced that the latest—WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010—is on its way to Wii and DS this fall. The publisher hasn't disclosed anything about the title's features or content, but considering that WWE competitors John Cena, the Undertaker, Randy Orton, Rey Mysterio, and Edge are the cover athletes, we think it's safe to say they'll be in the game. Expect more info later this summer. **—CHRIS H.**

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REAL SOCCER 2009

Avast, Me Hearties!

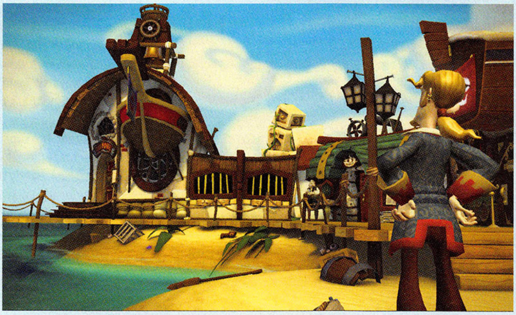
Telltale Games plunders the LucasArts coffers and revives a classic series as Tales of Monkey Island comes to WiiWare.

LucasArts was once known for its outstanding graphic-adventure PC games. One of its first entries in the genre was The Secret of Monkey Island, which told the story of Guybrush Threepwood, a wannabe pirate whose first quest was to recruit a crew and rescue the beautiful Governor Elaine Marley from the ghost pirate LeChuck. That first Monkey Island game and its sequels' clever puzzles and whip-smart sense of humor made it one of the company's most popular series. Sadly, there hasn't been a new Monkey Island game for nine years.

That is, until now. Telltale Games, the company behind Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People for WiiWare, has licensed the series from LucasArts and is releasing a new five-episode sequel called Tales of Monkey Island.

Picking up a few years after the last game, Escape from Monkey Island, Tales finds Guybrush in another scrape after a battle with LeChuck spreads the undead adversary's dark voodoo across the land, turning innocent pirates into zombielike monsters. Even one of Guybrush's hands has been contaminated (we detect an *Evil Dead* homage). The explosion of evil energy has blasted our hero to Flotsam Island, where he starts his epic search for a legendary sea sponge that can absorb the voodoo.

Unlike the older games, which required ample pointing and clicking to move Guybrush around, Tales has you control him with the Control Stick. The Wii Remote controller, of course, will be used for pointing at and selecting objects you discover. You'll use the objects in creative ways to solve the game's many puzzles—a formula that will be very familiar to those who have played the Strong Bad series. Unlike the Strong Bad games, however, Monkey Island's five episodes tell one long story instead of being five loosely connected scenarios. The dialogue trees are much broader here, as well, allowing for even more of Monkey Island's trademark humor.



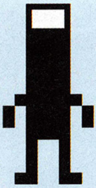
Dave Grossman, one of the designers of the original Monkey Island, is also the design director on Tales. He tells us, "The characters will be the same, be familiar; the humor style—we've gone to great lengths to get that right again." The original's primary designer, Ron Gilbert, even got involved, brainstorming with the team on Tales's characters and puzzles.

Tales of Monkey Island Chapter 1: Launch of the Screaming Narwhal—should be available soon (if it isn't out as you read this), with subsequent chapters expected to follow on a monthly basis. In Chapter 2: The Siege of Spinner City, Guybrush finds himself caught in a conflict between cursed pirates and a race of ancient merpeople, and the adventure promises to get even crazier from there. **—PHIL T.**

[Above] Yo ho ho and a bottle of root beer! That's what real pirates drink! Arr!

Trippy Interview

The star of the Bit.Trip WiiWare games, **Commander Video**, shares his words of wisdom.



Pixelated protagonist Commander Video arrived on WiiWare with the debut of Bit.Trip Beat, a unique title that combined retro-style graphics, Pong-like play mechanics, and rhythm-based gameplay to create one addictive experience. Now the second game in the series—Bit.Trip Core—is ready to land on WiiWare (it should be out soon if it isn't already), delivering a different type of old-school-infused rhythm action in which you emit timed beam blasts in four directions to hit incoming pixel blocks as they fly across the screen. As in the first Bit.Trip game, Commander Video is considered the main character (even though he rarely appears onscreen). But exactly who, or what, is Commander Video? To find out more about this strange and enigmatic hero, we went straight to the publishers at Aksys Games and the developers at Gaijin Games to interview Commander Video himself. —**CHRIS H.**

NINTENDO POWER **How would you describe yourself, and where did you come from?**

COMMANDER VIDEO I am only a man. I am from the same place you are from—I am from The Ether.

What is your mission?

EXPLORETHEPAST11
11
TRUEENJOYMENTISPURE1—FUTUREISCONVOLUTED11
11
MOVETOTHEBEAT1—LEARNABOUTTHECORE1—CONTROLSPACE1
11
RUN1—ENJOY1—GRAVITATEBACKTOTHEETHER1—UNLOCKTHEFUTURE11
11
THECOMMANDER1

Why are you into exploring retro-influenced video games?

OODATACOMPILED11
11
NINTENDOPOWERENGAGE11
11
FUTURESIGHTISPOSSIBLE1—

What are you a commander of, and how did you become a commander?

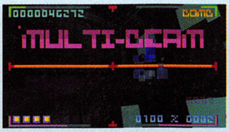
I command destiny.
Technology is fleeting.
With rhythm comes responsibility.
I command rhythm.
By being, we are charged to command.
The subordinate is superior.
We are all commanders.
We are all on a BIT.TRIP.

How did you acquire your manly, blocky physique?

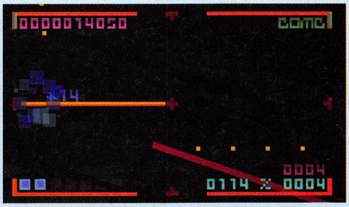
OODATACOMPILED11
11
NINTENDOPOWERENGAGE11
11
PERFECTION=SIMPLICITY1—INQUIRE:SIMPLICITY:11
11
SIMPLICITY=RECOGNITION1—INQUIRE:RECOGNITION:11
11
RECOGNITION=OUTWARDPERSONA1—INQUIRE:OUTWARDPERSONA:1
11
OUTWARDPERSONA=ONLYAMAN11
11
THECOMMANDER1

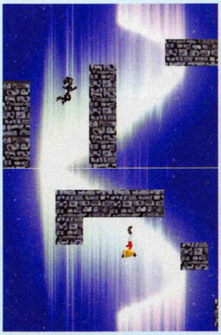
What is the meaning of life?

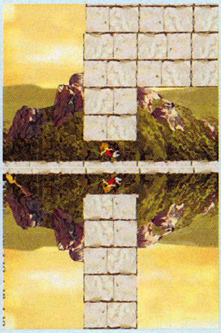
The meaning of life is to live. What does one achieve by living? Life. Is life all there is? I don't believe so. I will find out.



Commander Video is a weird dude, but Bit.Trip Core is pretty straightforward, not to mention challenging.







Double the Fun

Platforming on one screen is good; platforming on two screens is even better. At least it is in Reflections, an upcoming DSiWare game from Konami that started life as a student project at USC. Like any good 2-D-platformer star, heroine Kirra can jump, wall-bounce, grab ledges, push objects, and more, but when a mystical mirror shatters and splits reality in two, the action becomes twice as interesting. One world is shown on the top screen, and the alternate world is reflected on the bottom screen. Kirra is split in two, as well, and you control both versions of her simultaneously across the two planes. Different obstacles exist in each world, however, and trying to negotiate both screens simultaneously adds a puzzle element that provides a very unique and compelling challenge—especially since the world is upside down on the bottom screen. You'll explore four environments (a castle, a forest, a temple, and a tower) as you attempt to collect the mirror shards and reassemble reality. —**CHRIS H.**

Goodness Gracious, Great Balls of Fur!

Let the fur fly in **Furry Legends**, an all-new WiiWare platformer from European developer Gamelion Studios.

There have been plenty of furry video game heroes over the years—Donkey Kong, Fox McCloud, and Mario's upper lip, to name a handful—but few that announce their furriness as prominently as in Furry Legends for WiiWare. The protagonists of Furry Legends aren't just furry; they're roly-poly balls of fur—appropriately called Furballs. They have to put all of their platforming skills to the test when their land is invaded by their polar opposites, the Squaries, an angry, bitter race that's jealous of the Furballs' easygoing lifestyle. That, of course, is where you come in; you'll help the heroes roll and jump through numerous levels while solving physics-driven environmental puzzles, collecting crystals, smashing bad guys (by swinging the Wii Remote controller), crashing through barriers, and utilizing an assortment of special powers, such as superspeed, slow motion, and enhanced crushing power. Though the game is presently in pre-alpha form, the creators at Polish developer Gamelion Studios are working hard to make it one of the most promising original platformers on WiiWare. We recently checked in with producer Lukasz Szczepanski to learn more about Furry Legends. **—CHRIS H.**

NINTENDO POWER **Where did the idea for Furry Legends originate, and why did you choose to make it your first venture on WiiWare?**

LUKASZ SZCZEPANSKI We were toying around with the concept of doing something on WiiWare. Originally we wanted to release something small and simple—something that would allow us to learn more about the platform and the process. Since doing something fast usually means reuse of code, we took the physics engine from our Flash game Funkyball 99 and started to think what we could do with it. Some guys got inspired by the old Amiga classic Fury of the Furries and we went along with it. Back then it looked simple and doable, since we wanted to make it in 2-D. However, the ambitious beasts that we are, we figured that we wanted to make a dynamic entry, and we went 3-D.

What separates this game from similar games on WiiWare?

Mostly the quality of the graphics and the physics engine. We have a lot of dynamic elements in our levels, and no two playthroughs will look quite the same.

What are your main design goals for the game?

We want to make the game as natural and accessible to the player as possible. We want something that you can pick up and play without learning too many nuances of the controls. All the levels and the puzzles are constructed in a way that will be easy to digest for the player. We believe that players will overcome our puzzles based on their real-life experiences of how stuff works.

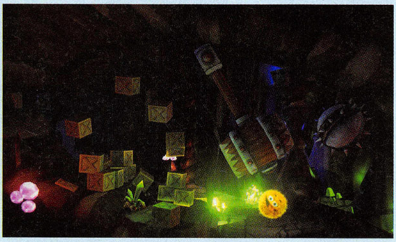
Why did you opt for traditional controls instead of, say, tilt controls or something along those lines?

We tried. We really tried. We spent a good month of time prototyping controls, trying to make something original and unique. In the end, however, we had to look back and see if our innovation is actually ergonomic for the player—and it was not.... We opted for the normal "arcade" controls, because we felt that it is something that players will expect. And when they pick up a platform game, they expect something between Sonic and Mario, without a gimmicky control scheme that requires them dancing around the living room to move forward.

How does the "fur" part of Furry Legends play a prominent role? Especially since the characters' defining feature seems to be that they're spherical rather than that they're furry?

The characters are spherical Furballs. They're just that—spheres covered in fur. Creating good-looking fur is pretty challenging on Wii, especially as our character takes a small portion of the screen, and with the resolution of the Wii [console], you don't have many

[Below] Realistic physics drive the environmental puzzles—for example, sending a spiked ball flying with a giant hammer.



pixels left. In general, we wanted to emphasize the conflict between the two races inhabiting the world. They're the exact opposites of each other. On one hand we have the round, furry spheres; on the other, cold, bald, and sharp Squaries. It's a bit like picturing good and evil, but without the halos and the brimstone.

How do you acquire new powers or characters?

You acquire additional powers through the story. Long story short—the Squaries have kidnapped the leaders of different Furball clans, and you set out to rescue them. Once you free one of your comrades, he joins you and his power becomes yours. It's a bit like changing the characters in [Super NES classic] The Lost Vikings, but you control only one character.

What are some examples of how those powers are used to get by obstacles?

For instance, often you will find ramps leading to higher parts of the level, but with regular rolling speed there's no way you can make it. You'll need to use your speed power to get up there. Another example is a corridor filled with rotating blades; even with superspeed you won't be able to roll through fast enough. This is where time slow enters the scene. You slow the time, the blades slow down significantly, and you can roll through with your regular speed.

What kind of physics are implemented in the game? How do physics affect the gameplay?

The whole world is built on physics. Everything in the world has its weight, density, and other parameters. There's the gravity that pulls stuff down. The majority of our puzzles make extensive use of physics. Sometimes you'll have to topple a support under a platform to release a stone ball, which will then roll down the slope to press a really big button, which opens the door in some other part of the level. You'll have something like a Ferris wheel, where you need to jump from swing to swing in order to get further. All movable objects can bounce off each other, push other objects, and add weight where necessary. The possibilities are endless here.

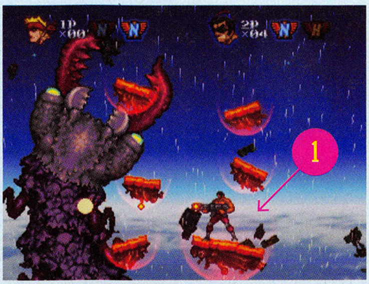
What makes Furry Legends ideal for WiiWare?

It's a small game, targeted at platforming fans. In addition, we want to publish it ourselves, without the help of publishers where necessary. WiiWare gives us exactly this—we can publish the game, there's a lot of platforming fans on Wii, and since we're aiming at a small game, the community won't hold the size or length against us.... On top of that, Nintendo helps us with game [evaluation], code support, and other tools, so it is a great partnership deal for us.

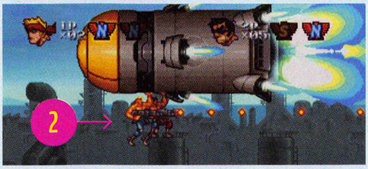
Real Men Shoot Aliens

Check out the most macho moments of **Contra ReBirth**, the all-new WiiWare chapter in Konami's hit shooter series.

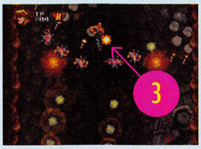
Konami still hasn't announced when Contra ReBirth will be available on WiiWare in North America, but for the sake of 2-D-action fans across the continent, we hope it's soon. True to the Contra name, ReBirth is a side-scrolling, alien-blasting tour de force, packed end to end with enemy patterns to overcome, weapons to collect, aliens soldiers to destroy, and nasty bosses to battle. Longtime Contra fans will feel right at home running and jumping through stages, weaving through enemy fire, and teaming up with a friend to blow away the forces of evil. And new players shouldn't have any trouble getting into the action, thanks to multiple difficulty options. While we await good news from Konami, here are some of Contra ReBirth's highlights—the moments that prove why main character Bill Rizer and company are some of the baddest dudes in all of gaming. —CHRIS H.



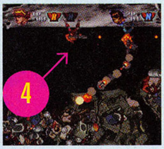
1 Earthbound Re-entering Earth's atmosphere without a space suit is pretty macho. Doing it while fighting a giant killer centipede is something else.



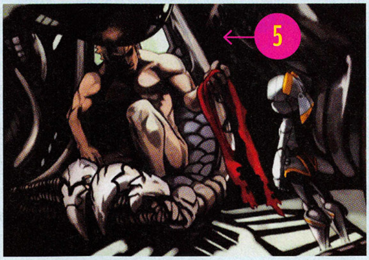
2 Need a Lift? Only the Contra team would consider a giant missile to be a suitable form of transportation. And that missile? It's actually a transforming robot.



3 Free Fall of Doom Sometimes there's nothing you can do but free-fall through a huge pit lined with spiked mines, lasers, and lava traps while blasting everything you see.



4 Shirtless in Space It takes a supermanly man to fight a boss while bare-chested and on the moon... and upside down.



5 Going Commando When there's nothing left to shoot, it's time to go starkers and climb back into your cryogenic sleep pod. Hold my headband for me, robot!

EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare

ADVENTURE ISLAND: THE BEGINNING

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Hudson takes us back to the NES era with this remake of its classic Adventure Island. The platforming action is just as solid as it has always been, with loads of unforgiving jumps and plenty of fruit to grab to replenish Higgins's ever-diminishing stamina. The game eases the difficulty with purchasable items that grant new abilities, but it's still a decent challenge. A few fun minigames round out the package. **—PHIL T.**

Recommended

WiiWare

BUBBLE BOBBLE PLUS!

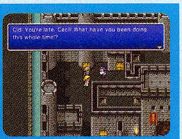
PUBLISHER: **TAITO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **600**

Bubble Bobble has always been an outstanding multiplayer game. The gameplay (shoot bubbles at the enemies, then pop 'em) is so simple and addictive that even nongamers can have a blast with it. This edition contains a graphically enhanced version of the original as well as a new Arrange mode in which you face 100 all-new levels, and four people can play simultaneously. This alone makes a great multiplayer experience even better. **—PHIL T.**

Recommended

WiiWare

Kain: Cecil...



Cid: You're late, Cecil! What have you been doing this whole time!?

White Fang
Succubus
Cave Bat 3
Hooded Man 912 / 1057 43
Ceodore 543 / 789 145

FINAL FANTASY IV: THE AFTER YEARS

PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX** · GENRE: **RPG** · WII POINTS: **800**

Justin C's Pick

Playing Final Fantasy IV: The After Years is a treat for anyone who has fond memories of playing Final Fantasy IV (then known as FFII) on the Super NES. The WiiWare sequel is set in the same world and has mostly the same cast (the most notable newcomer is protagonist Ceodore, the son of Cecil and Rosa), similar 2-D graphics, and an appropriately old-school difficulty level. This last point may be a turn-off to those used to modern RPGs that tend to require less grinding, but I actually kind of like the fact that there's some challenge to the dungeons. I wish the random battles occurred less frequently, though. I'm also not that keen on the fact that the phases of the moon alter the strength of your abilities. On the other hand, the Bands (team-up attacks, akin to the Techs from Chrono Trigger) are a welcome addition. This first chapter is on the short side (around five hours), but Final Fantasy fans will definitely find it worth playing.

Recommended

WiiWare

CRYSTAL DEFENDERS R2

PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
Wii POINTS: **800**

The second round of Crystal Defenders is essentially the same as the first, albeit with new units, maps, and enemy types. It's also significantly more difficult than its predecessor. Whether or not that's a good thing depends on your tolerance for trial and error. Otherwise, this remains a solid take on the tower-defense genre. As with R1, my biggest complaint is the lack of value compared to other iterations of the game on competing platforms. **—STEVE T.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare

FAMILY PIRATE PARTY

PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

A stripped-down board game with a pirate theme, this party allows for up to four participants, but very little direct competition. The minigames are all single-player exercises, and much simpler than the average Mario Party minigame. You can steal gold from your opponents, but your ability to do so boils down to luck, not strategy. The core game features three boards, with more available for additional Wii Points. **—GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare

SILVER STAR CHESS

PUBLISHER: **AGETEC**
GENRE: **BOARD GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

Easily identifiable pieces and simple point-and-click controls make Silver Star Chess a solid title for the chess purist. It forgoes playing-piece, board, or rule variations to focus on the classic game. Five CPU-controlled opponents vary from novice to expert, an Undo button lets you back out of mistakes, and the hint feature helps you plot your next move. The music is distracting lounge piano, but thankfully you can turn it off. **—GEORGE S.**

Recommended

WiiWare

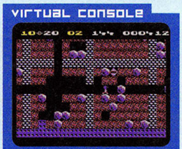
TEXAS HOLD'EM TOURNAMENT

PUBLISHER: **DIGITAL LEISURE**
GENRE: **CARD GAME**
Wii POINTS: **500**

A Texas Hold 'Em game with good, conservative AI is as rare as pocket aces, but Digital Leisure's entry pulls it off. The blinds raise every three minutes, so the action gets intense early on, even though hands are often resolved before you see the river card. You can take your Mii into an online tourney and outfit it with custom clothing by spending your winnings. Everyone will know you're a high roller when you arrive in a $50,000 tux. **—GEORGE S.**

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



BOULDER DASH

PLATFORM: **COMMODORE 64**
PUBLISHER: **COMMODORE GAMING/ FIRST STAR SOFTWARE**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1984**

Boulder Dash was way popular back in the '80s, and it maintains a cult following to this day. The Dig Dug-inspired gameplay, which has you collecting diamonds and avoiding falling rocks, is still fairly enjoyable. Solid level design and fiendish enemies add to the challenge. Unfortunately, the game's graphics and sound aren't doing it any favors. If you can look past those, you'll have a good time. **—PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

CLAY FIGHTER

PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS**
PUBLISHER: **INTERPLAY**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Clay Fighter wasn't a top-tier fighting game to begin with, so why Virtual Console is the recipient of the Sega Genesis version of the game instead of the vastly superior Super NES version is beyond me. The digitized clay graphics are weak in only 64 colors, and the rockin' SNES theme song is missing in action. Throw in questionable collision detection and cheap AI, and you get a fighting game that just doesn't hold up. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

GALAXY FORCE II

PLATFORM: **SEGA GENESIS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1991**

The Galaxy Force games were pretty awesome in the arcade, but something just didn't survive the transition to the Genesis. Intergalactic 3-D shooting didn't work very well with 1991 console technology, and it's nearly unplayable now. The fact that you have to play with either your thrusters or your guns (which are useless, by the way) controlled automatically should have been a tip-off that Galaxy Force wasn't meant to be played like this. —CHRIS H.

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE

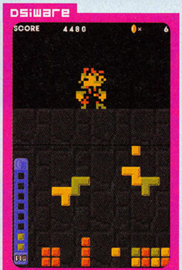
AMERICAN POPSTAR: ROAD TO CELEBRITY

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **RHYTHM**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

Don't let American Popstar's preteen-girl facade fool you—it's actually pretty fun. Colorful, detailed visuals and a humorous script help bring this story of a pop-star wannabe to life. Between managing your character's social stats (by chatting up NPCs) and improving his/her music skills (via minigames), there's a lot of meat to this game. A limited song selection and a linear quest are the only real drawbacks. —PHIL T.

Recommended

DSiWARE



ART STYLE: PICTOBITS

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

PiCTOBiTS teaches a valuable lesson: almost anything is better with Nintendo characters in it. The color-matching, block-dropping premise is fun, and when you're rewarded with classic Nintendo sprites and music, it's even more addictive. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK

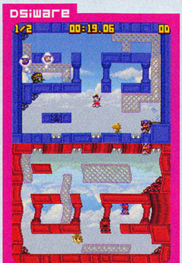
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 64** · PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **ADVENTURE** · ORIGINAL RELEASE: **2000**

Chris Sl's Pick

Majora's Mask is always overshadowed by its N64 sibling Ocarina of Time, but the game's unique take on the Zelda formula makes it a worthy addition to the storied series. Many distinct features set it apart, such as a repeating three-day structure, Link's three alternate forms, a higher difficulty level, and a darker atmosphere. With Majora's Mask, every console Zelda title is now playable on Wii, so download it and celebrate!

Recommended

DSiWARE



MIGHTY FLIP CHAMPS!

PUBLISHER: **WAYFORWARD**
GENRE: **ACTION/PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

This addictive game's main gimmick, the ability to "flip" the game screen while your character remains stationary, is extremely clever, and there are some excellent puzzles built around it. It gets very challenging quickly, though, so be prepared to think. —PHIL T.

Recommended

DSiWARE

REAL SOCCER 2009

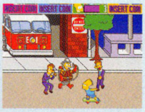
PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

If you already own Real Soccer 2009 in physical form (it was released for Nintendo DS late last year), you won't find much new in this downloadable version, other than some kind of amusing camera stuff (you can take your picture and map your face onto a player, for instance). But for footie fans who haven't played it before, this is a solid FIFA-style soccer game. It's not revolutionary, but it's fun overall. —JUSTIN C.

Hmmm...

WANTED!

Arcades aren't as popular as they once were, but gamers' enthusiasm for their favorite coin-op titles hasn't diminished. We were pretty surprised to learn that the Nintendo Power readers are just as fond of '80s and '90s multiplayer arcade beat-'em-ups as its editors are, especially when it comes to games such as The Simpsons, X-Men, and Golden Axe: The Revenge of Death Adder, none of which have been ported to a home video game console.



READERS' MOST WANTED: ARCADE

1. The Simpsons
2. X-Men
3. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
4. Donkey Kong
5. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles in Time

NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED: ARCADE

1. Golden Axe: The Revenge of Death Adder
2. The Simpsons
3. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
4. X-Men
5. Darkstalkers

There are a lot of games that fall into the action category, but that won't stop us from listing your most-wanted games in the genre next issue. Send your top five most-wanted **action games** to **vcpoll@nintendopower.com** and we'll print the results. Note: This is for polling purposes only and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

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Ready for Prime Time

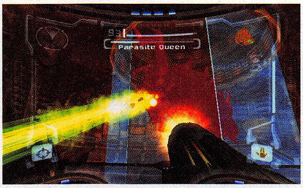
>METROID PRIME TRILOGY

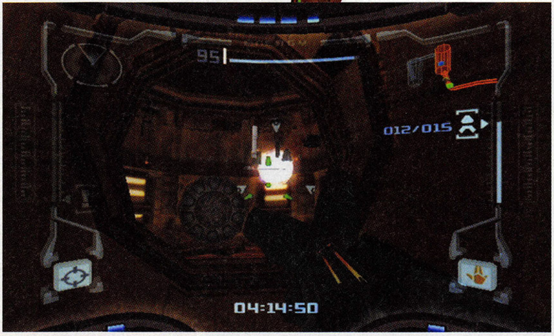
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **RETRO STUDIOS** • RELEASE: **AUGUST 2009**

If you're craving all things Metroid after watching (and rewatching) the Metroid: Other M trailer, you're in luck—you won't have to wait until next year to get your Metroid fix. See, Nintendo is releasing all three Metroid Prime games in one convenient package called, appropriately enough, Metroid Prime Trilogy. Granted, you may have already played all three of the games before, but you haven't played them—well, the first two at least—like this. Both Metroid Prime and Metroid Prime 2: Echoes have undergone some significant changes in their transitions to the Wii console. These two games now have not only 16:9 widescreen support, but also some graphical and technical enhancements (like bloom lighting and faster loading times, respectively), as well as new Metroid Prime 3: Corruption-style controls.

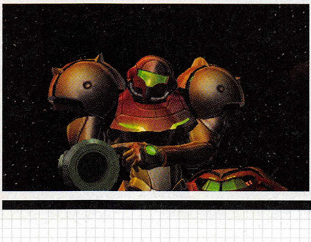
Based on what we've played so far, we can testify that using the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers breathes new life into the already excellent titles. Because it's easier to dispatch enemies by pointing at and shooting them with the Wii Remote, you're getting a better first-person shooter experience overall. Along those lines, the controls noticeably improve Echoes's multiplayer, giving the mode a more fast-paced, frantic feel (in a good way). Otherwise, the multiplayer mode remains the same: up to four players can play at once via a split screen. (Unfortunately, you can't play online.) It's not all that robust—especially considering there are only four multiplayer maps to choose from initially (two more maps are unlockable)—but we had fun gathering around a TV in our office and playing both Deathmatch and Bounty. (Bounty has you drop coins when you get hit, and collect coins by hitting others; the person with the most coins at the end wins.)

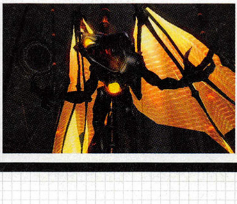
Taking another cue from Corruption, a system in which you get tokens for completing certain in-game tasks has been added to Prime and Echoes. And since all three games are on one disc, you can, for example, purchase songs from Echoes with the tokens you acquired from Corruption. The inclusion of these tokens in all three titles may not be quite as major as the overhauled controls, but it does provide extra incentive for fans to replay these superb games. **—JUSTIN C.**



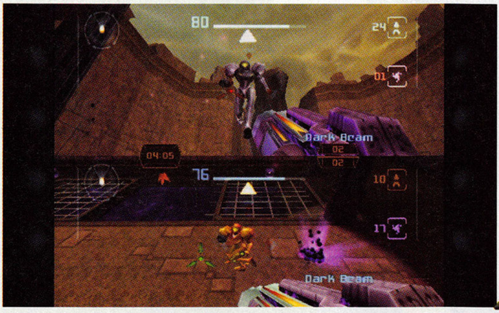


[Above] Press down on the Control Pad to fire missiles. [Below] Watch out for Ridley!





[Below] The new controls help make the split-screen multiplayer in Metroid Prime 2 a lot more fun.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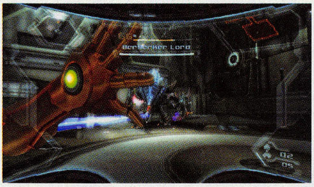
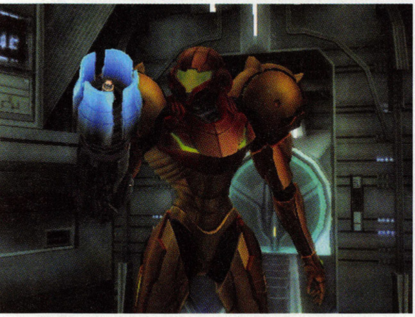
Dark Beam

[Below] Even if you already own Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, why not play it again?


Berserker Lord



Back in the Old Days...

>NOSTALGIA

PREVIEW AUGUST '09

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **IGNITION**
DEVELOPER: **RED ENTERTAINMENT/TECMO**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2009**

Nostalgia is a game that takes a bit of getting used to. Parts of it are completely conventional, and parts of it are anything but. It plays like a standard fantasy RPG, but it doesn't look or feel like one.

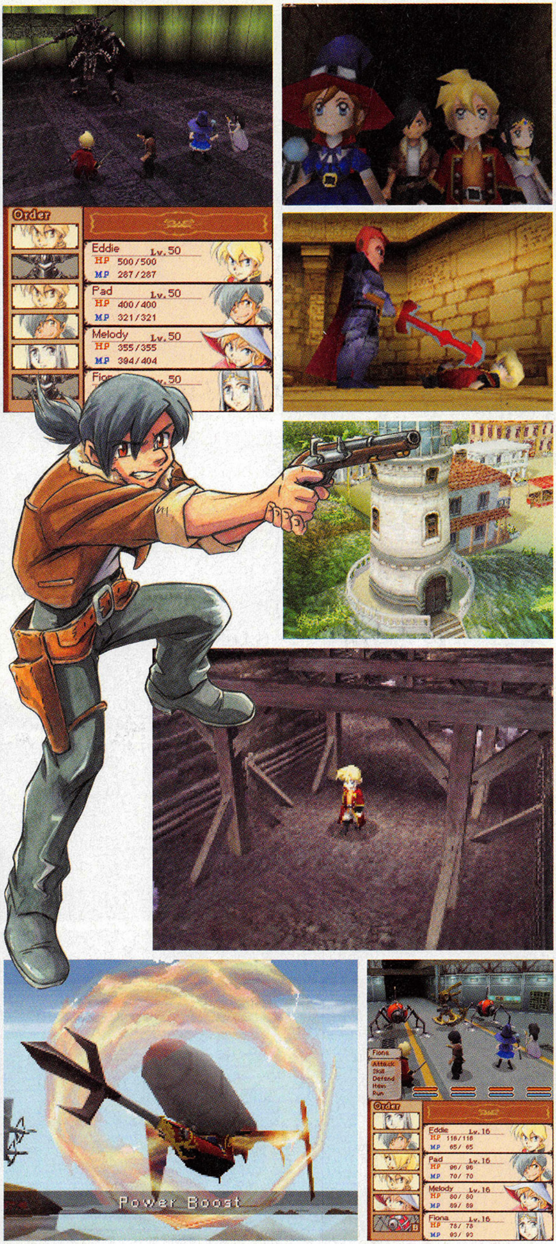
Red Entertainment has always been fond of sticking tried-and-true gameplay in front of strange backdrops. The company's Japanese hit Sakura Wars was a pretty basic turn-based strategy game, but it was a strategy game about pastel-colored, steam-powered robots in a demon-haunted 1920s Tokyo. Nostalgia operates on the same basic principle—take a simple genre formula and toss it in a blender with some good old-fashioned pulp adventure fiction.

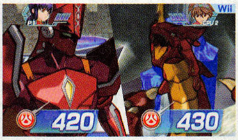
Character Gilbert Brown is what you'd get if Indiana Jones flew an airship over the skies of 19th-century England. He's not the hero of Nostalgia, though; he's the MacGuffin. The hero is his young son Eddie, who wants to follow in his father's footsteps and find out more about his dad's mysterious disappearance.

Eddie's quest begins with some predictable RPG clichés—just as in so many fantasy adventures of old, Eddie's first task involves wiping a sewer clean of rats. Soon enough, though, the action picks up a bit and our hero builds a rag-tag crew of allies, such as a gun-slinging thug from the East End of London and a would-be magician in a weird pointy hat. The character designs are a strange mix that way. Some of them look right at home in Nostalgia's mostly realistic world, and others feel like they wandered in from a medieval fantasy being developed next door.

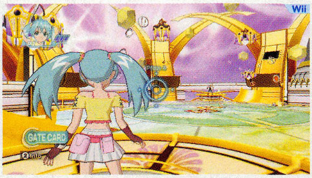
In a game like this, though, you need only suspend your disbelief for so long. Soon enough the quest gets rolling and all the funny quirks get easier and easier to accept. It helps that this is a very well-made game; even the early dungeons have some fun puzzles and interactive environments to liven things up. The turn-based combat is perfectly straightforward, and the two-screen interface delivers all the information you need without wasting any space. Red Entertainment's artists, as usual, provide the kind of design that makes even simple menu screens easy on the eyes.

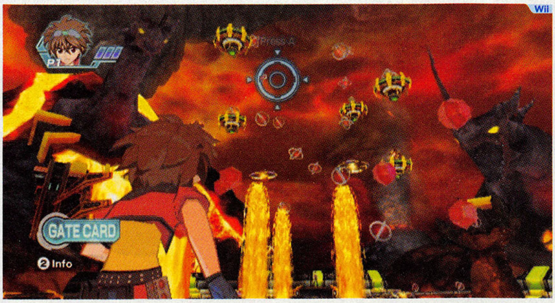
Nostalgia is a game that knows what its priorities are. It isn't an attempt to reinvent the RPG genre, but it does seem to be aptly named on a couple of levels. Keisuke Kikuchi, who headed the project for Tecmo, says he wanted something that called back to things he enjoyed in his childhood—both the stories he used to read and the games he used to play. We haven't quite made it to the end of the quest, but so far it looks like the developers have hit both targets. —**DAVID S.**

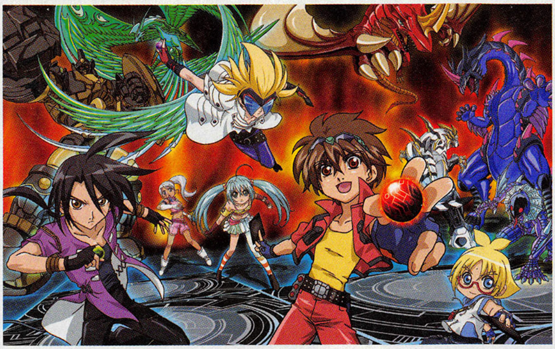


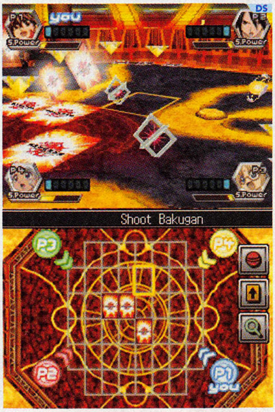


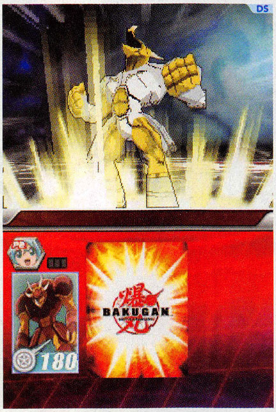
[Above] These are just two of the 40 Bakugan that you can bring into battle.











Roll Player

>BAKUGAN BATTLE BRAWLERS

PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **NOW PRODUCTIONS** • RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

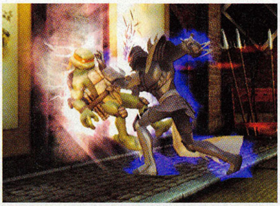
With two years running as the Toy Industry Association's Toy of the Year and its anime counterpart's increasing popularity on the Cartoon Network, Bakugan Battle Brawlers is primed to roll out onto every major gaming platform, including Wii and DS, this fall. The combination toy and card game is simple but compelling. Competitors place Gate cards onto a circular playing field, then take turns launching Bakugan in ball form at the cards. When a Bakugan lands, it opens up to reveal the creature inside. When two opposing Bakugan land on the same card, a battle begins. Each Bakugan's G-Power is pumped up by the Gate card's attributes and additional Ability card; the creature with the highest enhanced G-Power wins the battle, and the card goes to that creature's owner.

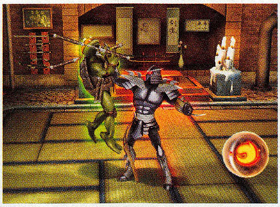
In the video game adaptation, battles promise to be dynamic struggles between large creatures that hatch from the Bakugan balls, and a showcase for established Bakugan competitors such as Dan Kuso and Masquerade (who strike dramatic poses and shout "Bakugan brawl!"). In the card game you don't have any control over your Bakugan once it emerges from its shell, but in the Wii and DS versions, you'll have enough control to collect power-ups that are littered throughout the battle arena (each of which has a different size and shape, plus unique traps and power-ups). That could be enough to earn you a victory.

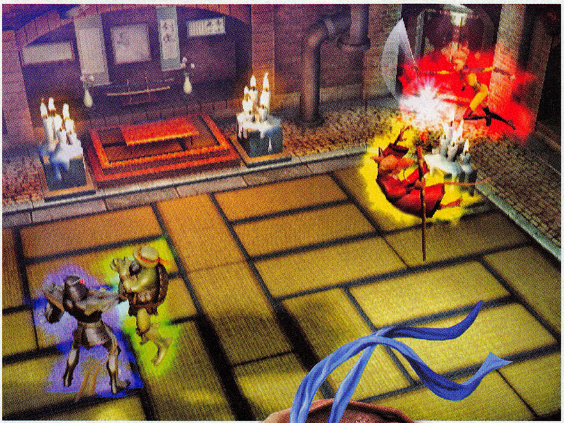
The game's story was crafted by writers from the Bakugan Battle Brawlers anime series. It centers on young Bakugan battler Rikku, who is out to make a name for himself in Bakugan tournaments. After a brief stint with Dan's prized Drago, Rikku acquires his own Bakugan, Leonidas, and sets off for brawling fame and fortune. Leonidas is new to the Bakugan universe, but the game features plenty of established Bakugan, too—a total of 40 creatures from the six Bakugan home worlds: water planet Aquos, wind world Ventus, fiery Pyrus, rocky Subterra, light world Haos, and shadow world Darkus. You'll also collect hundreds of cards, allowing you to formulate winning strategies against the game's most difficult opponents.

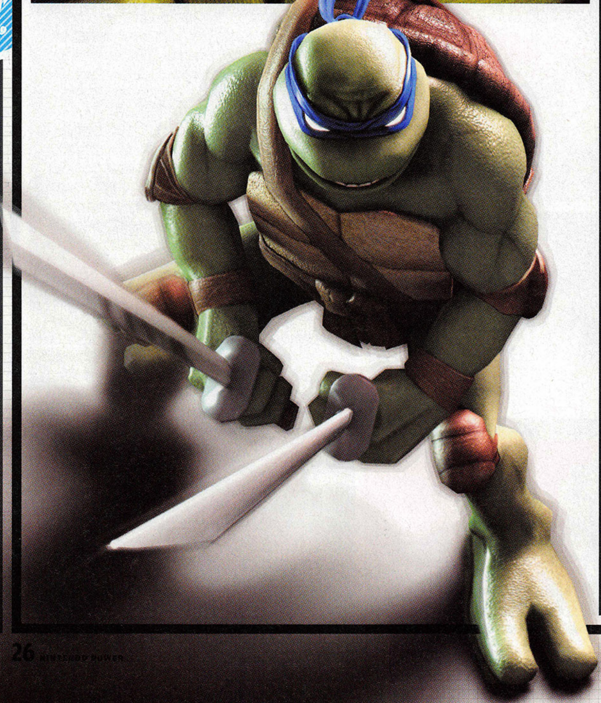
In Battle mode, you can play as one of several characters from the anime series or create your character from scratch. You can customize the arena, adjust match parameters, and change game rules in taking on either CPU-controlled brawlers or other Bakugan fans.

Details about differences between the DS and Wii versions of the title have not yet been released, but Activision has noted that the DS version will come packaged with an exclusive, limited-edition Bakugan toy that can be used in the card game. **—GEORGE S.**









Turtle Power!

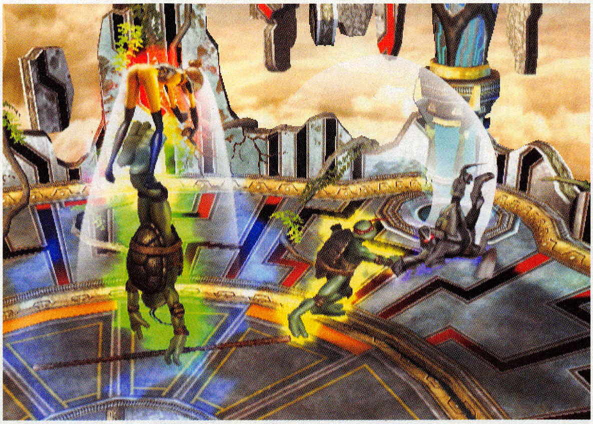
> TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: SMASH-UP

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **GAME ARTS** • RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2009**

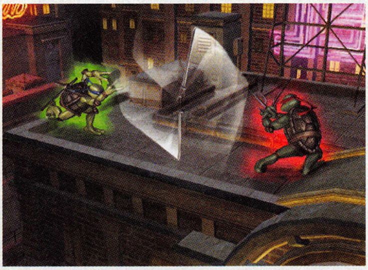
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Super Smash Bros. are certainly two great tastes, but do they taste great together? Based on our hands-on time with TMNT: Smash-Up, we'd say so. Getting into the Super Smash Bros.-style action is a snap: when using a Wii Remote by itself (the game also supports a Wii Remote-and-Nunchuk option), you hold the remote sideways and move with the Control Pad, guard with B, perform light attacks with 1 and strong attacks with 2, and grab an opponent by tapping 1 and 2 together. Pressing the Control Pad in a direction in conjunction with an attack button allows you to do different attacks than if you press the attack buttons alone. If you grab a ninja power-up, such as fire breath or an electric shield, you can trigger it with A. Using these basic controls, you try to defeat up to three other players by forcing them off the battlefield (which is really possible only on levels such as Manhattan, which takes place on the rooftops of large buildings) or by depleting their life bars.

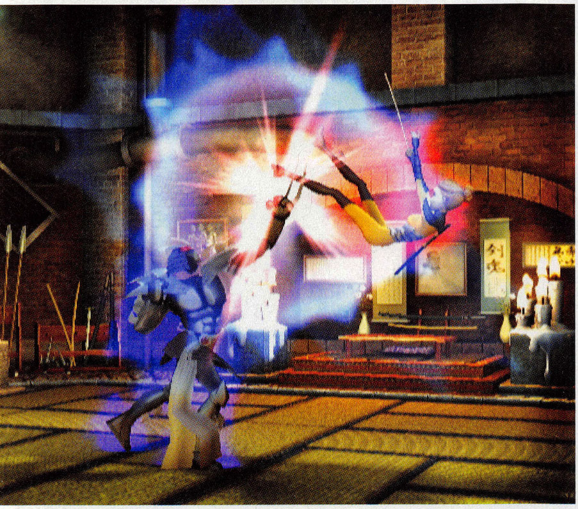
In addition to the punches, kicks, and ninja powers, the environment also can help you beat your opponents. In the Jungle and Sewer levels, for instance, a giant man-eating crocodile routinely jumps out of the water at the bottom of the stages and takes the life of the unfortunate player in its vicinity. (When we played the game, the default setting was three lives per character, but you can customize that number as you see fit.) Fortunately, a warning pops up before the croc appears, so you can jump to a higher platform to avoid getting eaten. Another environmental hazard is in the Enemy Base level, in which there's a device that—once activated by someone hitting the giant switch in the middle of the level—randomly singles out a character and fires a deadly laser beam at him or her. (The picture that appears at the top of the screen tells you who's the intended victim.) However, you have a brief amount of time to hit the switch again, making the device target someone else.

Ubisoft says the fighter roster will consist of a variety of characters from the TMNT universe, but we had access to just seven: Leonardo, Donatello, Raphael, Michelangelo, Splinter, April, and Shredder. As you'd expect, the characters each have different strengths and weaknesses. For example, Raphael is quick but weaker than the slower Donatello. Shredder is a strong fighter, but Splinter is the real standout: the turtles' master has an arsenal of short-range yet extremely powerful attacks. Of course, we're told that developer Game Arts is continually making tweaks to the game, trying to ensure that it's balanced. That's important for any fighting game, but it's especially so for one like this that can be played online. —**JUSTIN C.**

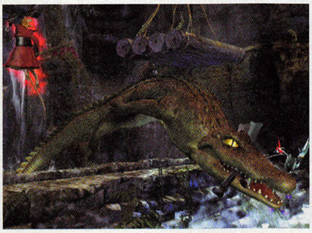


[Right] Leonardo and Raphael never seem to get along.





Shredder may be strong [above], but even the strongest fighters can't beat a giant crocodile [below].



Heroes' Journey

>STAR WARS THE CLONE WARS: REPUBLIC HEROES

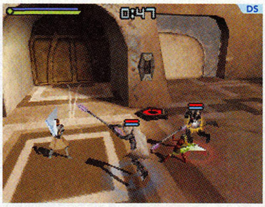
PLATFORM: **Wii, NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **KROME (Wii), LUCASARTS SINGAPORE (DS)**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2009**

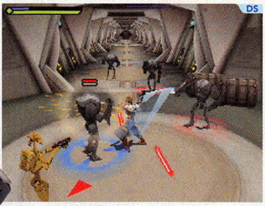
If you're craving more of the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* TV show while you wait for the second season to start, LucasArts has just the thing for you—Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes, a game that's supposed to bridge the two seasons. And unlike last year's games based on the CG-animated series—Lightsaber Duels for Wii and Jedi Alliance for Nintendo DS—Republic Heroes allows you to play as some of the clone troopers, such as Captain Rex and Commander Cody, as well as the Jedi, including Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker, and Ahsoka Tano.

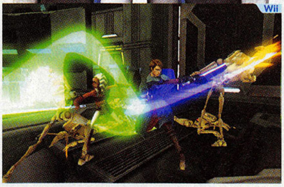
Obviously, the clone troopers and Jedi play distinctly; after all, the former rely on guns and jet packs whereas the latter use lightsabers and the Force. For the Wii version, the primary difference from a control standpoint is that you point at enemies with the Wii Remote when you're a clone, and swipe with the remote when you're a Jedi. There are other differences in terms of gameplay styles. The clone-centric stages require more tactics, forcing you to take cover behind barricades and to use weapons such as blasters and thermal detonators; Jedi-focused levels, on the other hand, have platforming and plenty of Separatist droids to hack and slash. Additionally, the Jedi can jack a droid (yes, like a carjack) and control it, using its weapons to shoot its former allies. This gives the Jedi a long-range attack besides the Force Push ability.

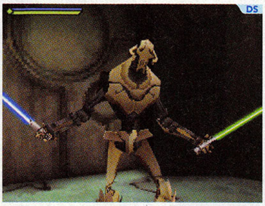
Regardless of whether you're playing as the clone troopers or the Jedi, you always have someone backing you up. Like LEGO Star Wars, Republic Heroes features drop-in, drop-out co-op, so there's either an AI- or human-controlled ally by your side at all times. Plus, you and your buddy can collect Force Points (think studs in LEGO Star Wars) that you can spend to upgrade your skills and purchase bonus items.

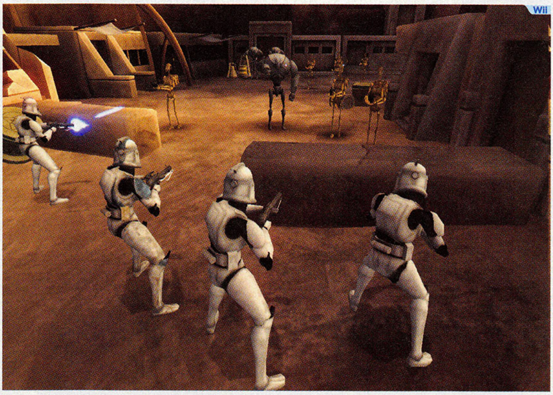
The Nintendo DS version of Republic Heroes is, of course, a different beast than its Wii sibling. For one thing, everything is controlled via the stylus; you point where you want to go, and you attack enemies by tapping on them. There's also none of the two-player cooperative element that's so central to the Wii version. However, the handheld game retains the idea that characters have to work together, as you have to swap between being a clone trooper and a Jedi whenever the situation warrants it. For example, in one level you start out playing as a clone trooper, and you fight your way through enemies until you're stopped by a gap that you can't cross. By tapping up on the Control Pad, you can switch to Obi-Wan—who's on the other side of the divide—and use the Force to create a pathway. **—JUSTIN C.**

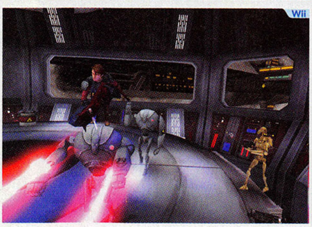




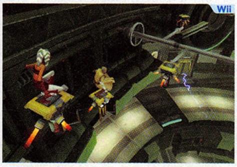


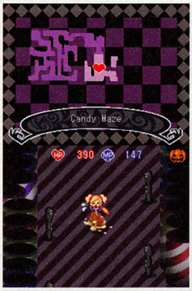




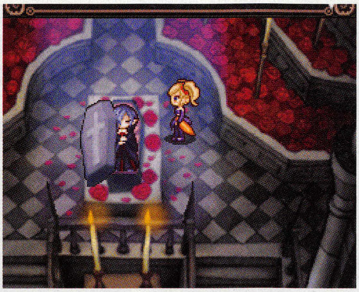


[Above] Those clone troopers should take cover—while the Separatists' droids may not be smart, they can be deadly.





Candy Maze
HP 390 MP 147



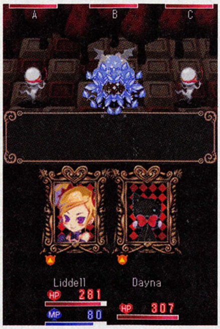
She's Crafty

>A WITCH'S TALE

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **NIS AMERICA**
DEVELOPER: **NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE/HITMAKER**
RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

While most other young witches are content to learn spells in the classroom, Liddell wants more. In fact, the protagonist of this DS RPG wants to be the greatest witch of all time, even greater than Queen Alice, who long ago banished a coven of dastardly witches from the surface world. So Liddell spends her time reading 1,000-year-old books about forbidden magic spells. Not happy with simply reading about this forbidden magic, however, Liddell heads off to a castle said to house an ancient spell in a tome—a tome that, once removed, frees the evil Eld Witch, who seeks revenge against Alice by cursing the world's six kingdoms. For instance, one of the kingdoms, the Candyland-esque Rem Sacchras, is attacked by monsters who have kidnapped the princess. It's up to Liddell and her Tauth doll allies to set things right.

Everything in A Witch's Tale, from movement to menu selection, is controlled with the stylus. Combat is reminiscent of that in the Dragon Quest games; you're presented with a row of enemies, and you select whether to use a physical attack, magic, or items. Instead of just tapping a selection, though, you actually move icons around with the stylus. To use fire magic, for example, you drag the fire-spell icon from the menu and place it over your target. —**JUSTIN C.**



A
B
C
Liddell
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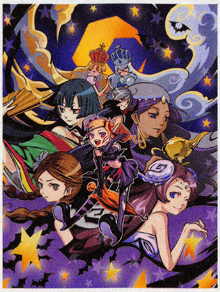
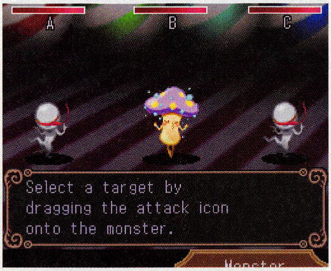
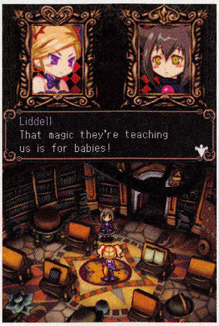
MP 80
Dayna
HP 307





A
B
C
Monster

Select a target by dragging the attack icon onto the monster.



Liddell
That magic they're teaching us is for babies!

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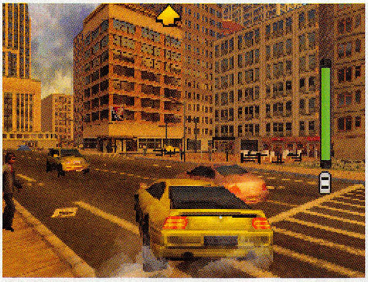
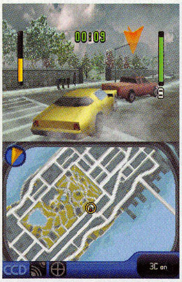




Whatcha Gonna Do?

>C.O.P. THE RECRUIT

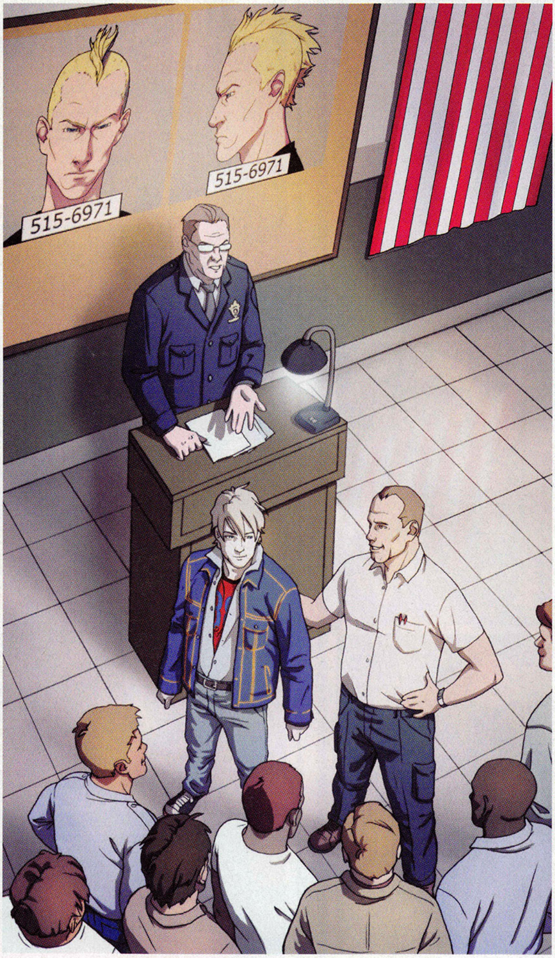
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **VD DEV** • RELEASE: **FALL 2009**

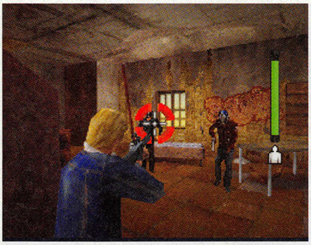
We really liked Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars; after all, it provided essentially the full GTA experience on the Nintendo DS. And we accepted the fact that the game had a top-down perspective due to the dual-screened handheld's lack of horsepower. Then Ubisoft showed us C.O.P. The Recruit, a portable game that looks and plays like a postmillennial GTA. "We are very proud of our breakthrough engine, which took us more than two years to complete," says Nouredine Abboud, a senior producer at Ubisoft. "Being able to play in a large, open-world city bustling with life while boasting full 3-D graphics and camera control at 60 FPS was an ambitious challenge.... On top of that, our streaming technology not only means that you will play your game very smoothly, but throughout your adventure, you will experience no loading times whatsoever."

Of course, all of this technology means nothing if the game isn't compelling. Fortunately, this one seems to be. "You are Dan Miles, a former underground street racer that entered the Criminal Overturn Program—C.O.P.—to avoid going to jail," explains Abboud. "As part of the program, your goal is to uphold the law and protect the citizens of New York City. Working with your mentor, Detective Brad Winter, you are investigating a series of terrorist attacks in the city when Brad is falsely arrested, putting the investigation on hold. While trying to uncover the truth behind Brad's arrest, Dan goes undercover and returns to his life on the streets."

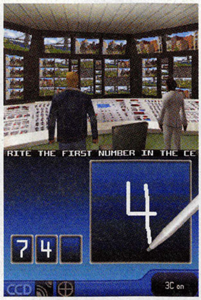
Driving is straightforward: enter and exit a car with X, steer with the Control Pad, accelerate with B, and brake with A. When we played the game, it took a little while to get used to the slightly touchy steering, but we were able to drive around New York City to our objective—a casino—without damaging our vehicle too much. (One thing you don't have to worry about hitting is pedestrians; the game doesn't allow you to hit innocents even if you wanted to.)

But Abboud tells us, "Driving is...roughly 50 percent of the main storyline, but the game in itself is meant to be a complete action-adventure experience combining driving, shooting, and puzzle-solving minigames." For example, after you've driven to the casino and entered through its back door, you'll encounter a couple of enemies. To equip a weapon, you simply tap on the pistol icon on the touch screen, then you can aim at the baddies using the stylus and shoot them by pressing L or tapping on the touch screen. Other features of the Nintendo DS hardware are put to use as well. Abboud elaborates, "You will have to utilize the DS stylus and microphone to do things like install road blockades or use the city's surveillance network to spy on a terrorist group and obtain vital information." **—JUSTIN C.**





Like Grand Theft Auto, C.O.P. has a lot of gameplay variety. You can shoot bad guys [above], solve puzzles [right], and drive cars and boats [below].



RITE THE FIRST NUMBER IN THE CE

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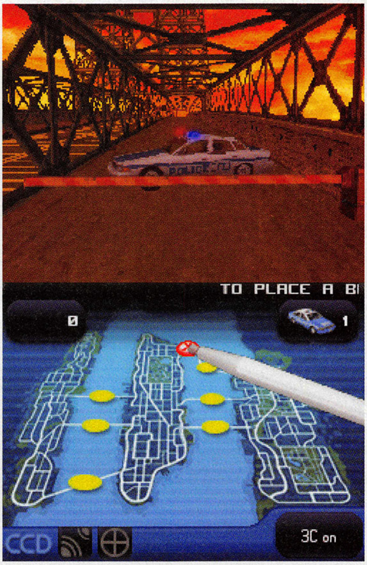

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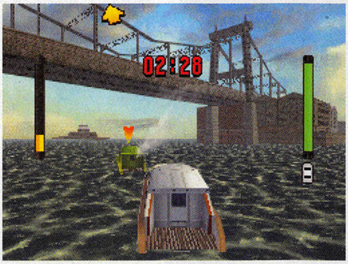

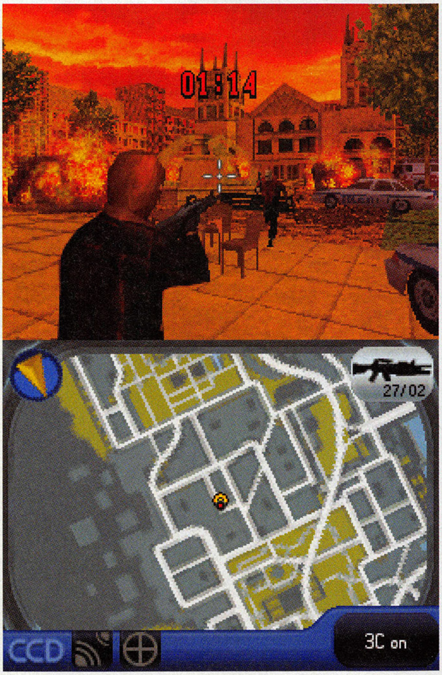

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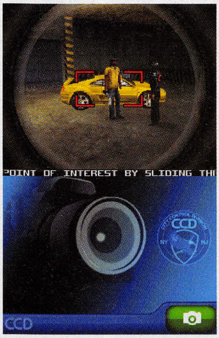

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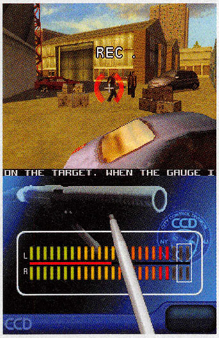
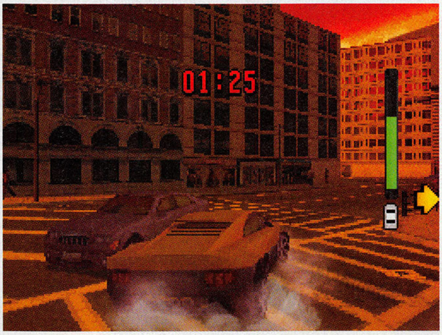


ON THE TARGET. WHEN THE GAUGE I



Built Joe Tough

>G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **DOUBLE HELIX** • RELEASE: **AUGUST 2009**

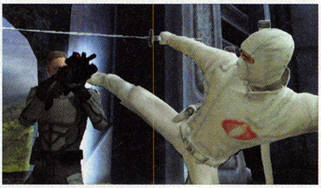
The members of G.I. Joe—America's daring, highly trained special-mission force—come from all branches of the military and provide a wide variety of elite skills and specialties. But in Electronic Arts's G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra, marksmanship and fisticuffs are the only skills you need to worry about, because the game focuses squarely on pounding the heck out of the evil armies of Cobra and MARS as you fight them from one end of the Earth to the other.

Set after the events of this summer's movie of the same name, G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra begins with one of Cobra's top agents, female intelligence officer the Baroness, held prisoner by the Joes in their mobile headquarters, the PIT. Almost immediately, however, tables are turned. Using a new teleportation technology, Cobra soldiers infiltrate the PIT, rescue the Baroness, and capture G.I. Joe heavy machine gunner Heavy Duty. It's up to G.I. Joe field commander Duke and counterintelligence operative Scarlett to strike back, and they do so in a big way, charging headlong into the bad guys' arctic operations with guns blazing. Both characters are on the screen at all times; in two-player mode each character controls a different Joe, and in single-player mode you can switch between Joes at any time with a button press.

Cobra foot soldiers, vehicles (including HISS tanks and Flight Pods), turrets, and heavily fortified bunkers bar your way; luckily you've got intuitive controls and an endless supply of ammo on your side. You can also hide behind cover to avoid incoming fire, use melee attacks to clobber evasive enemies (such as ninjas) and foes with energy shields, ride vehicles, and—after filling a special meter—put on your Accelerator Suit to temporarily max out your offensive and defensive abilities. Sadly, the developers didn't implement the fist-pumping gesture they were considering to activate the Accelerator Suit, but if you raise your arm and yell "Yo Joe" while powering up, no one will blame you.

As you blast through Cobra's strongholds, you'll rescue Heavy Duty and encounter other Joe troopers—such as commando Snake Eyes, paratrooper Ripcord, Marine Gung-Ho, ninja Kamakura, Navy SEAL Shipwreck, ranger Beach Head, and the mysterious Agent Helix (an all-new character created specifically for the game)—who you can add to your playable roster. Each character has unique attacks as well as differing stats, plus special abilities that grant them access to bonus areas.

And speaking of bonuses, The Rise of Cobra has plenty of unlockable goodies to keep you playing well after Cobra's defeat, including intel files, playable villains, and unintentionally hilarious animated public-service announcements. **—CHRIS H.**



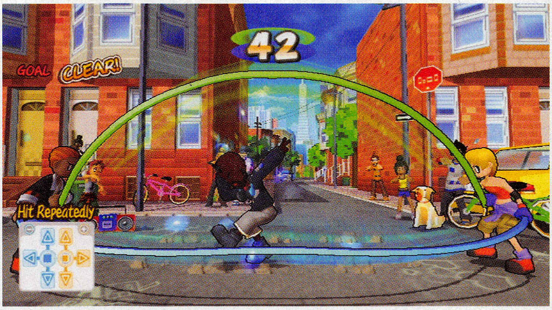
[Above] The other half of the battle: a really big chain gun.

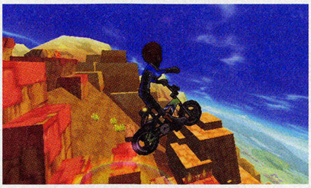
To the Extreme

>ACTIVE LIFE: EXTREME CHALLENGE

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI** • RELEASE: **AUGUST 2009**

If you're the kind of player who thinks games that don't make you sweat are for sissies, then Active Life: Extreme Challenge is for you. Like its predecessor (last year's Active Life: Outdoor Challenge), Extreme Challenge comes bundled with a special mat peripheral that lets you put your whole body into the experience. Fifteen events will test your coordination and endurance in different ways. For example, in rock climbing you press different buttons on the mat as you scale a cliff wall; in street luge you sit on the mat and press from side to side to hit jumps and turbo boosts; in BMX racing you run in place to build up record-setting speed; and in BASE jumping you input specific button combinations while in free fall. Other events include kite surfing, wake boarding, and jump rope (who knew that was extreme?). Mii compatibility, four types of tournaments (including custom ones), and multiplayer competition round out the feature set. **—CHRIS H.**





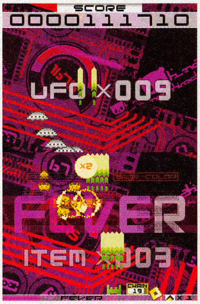
[Above] Just bring it! There's nothing more extreme than a pose like that.

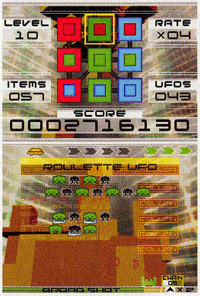
The Invasion Continues

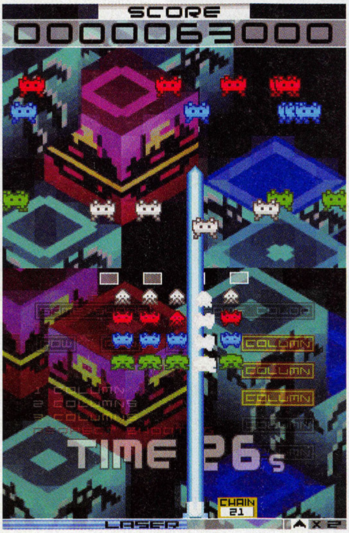
>SPACE INVADERS EXTREME 2

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **TAITO** • RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2009**

Last year's Space Invaders Extreme did something no one thought was possible: it made Space Invaders cool again. This year—the 30th anniversary of Space Invaders—the sequel is on its way, flashier and more action-packed than its predecessor. Fundamentally, the game hasn't changed: you still blast incoming hordes of iconic alien enemies out of the sky amidst snazzy graphical effects and a dynamic techno soundtrack that's synchronized to the action. However, Space Invaders Extreme 2 builds upon that foundation with a wider array of stages, explosive new weaponry, enhanced game mechanics (the bingo feature has been significantly improved), and new play options including a five-stage beginner's course and a Time Attack challenge. You'll also be able to go head-to-head against a friend (either locally or over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection) and connect to a global leaderboard to compete for high-score bragging rights. **—CHRIS H.**







[Above] The visuals are a fusion of old-school enemy sprites and trippy postmodern backgrounds. [Left] Sequentially defeat enemies in Bingo mode to really beef up your score.

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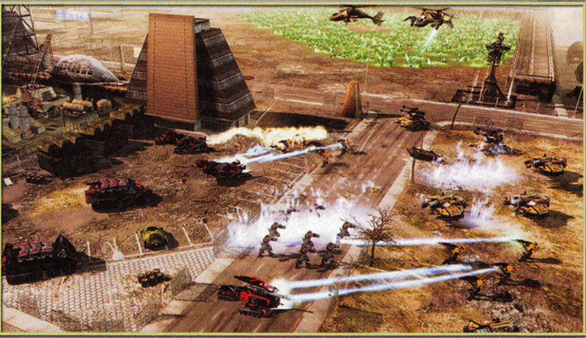
OLETO TICKET

DEMOS

MODS



PATCHES

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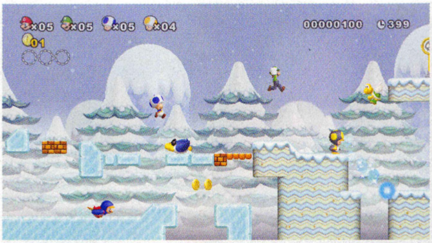
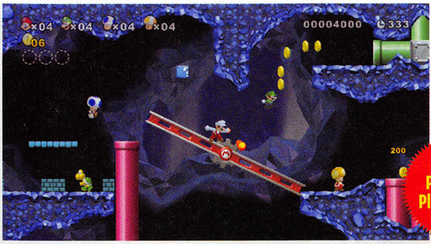
G.KNOWLEDGE

B3ST *of* SHOW

After a couple of years in the doldrums, the Electronic Entertainment Expo rose like a phoenix and reclaimed its former glory in 2009. The Los Angeles Convention Center was packed with new titles for the Wii console and Nintendo DS handheld, and there was no shortage of surprises at this year's show. On the following pages, you'll find the crème de la crème; the games that most impressed us, shocked us, and compelled us.



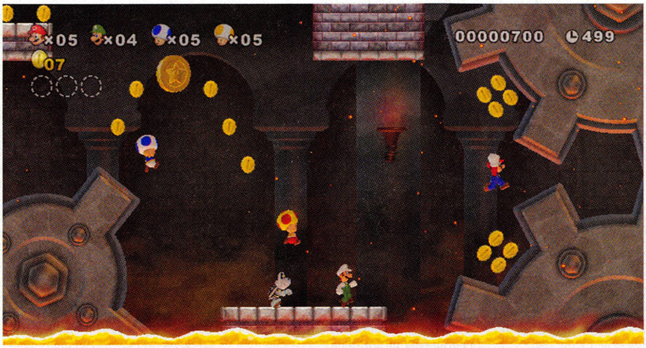


Best Playable Platformer

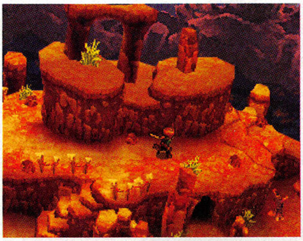
New Super Mario Bros. Wii

Wii • NINTENDO • HOLIDAY 2009

I never thought I'd see another classic-style 2-D Mario platformer on a home console, but with New Super Mario Bros. Wii, Nintendo has delivered just that—traditional block-breaking, Goomba-stomping, mushroom-munching action. Actually, calling it "traditional" is probably inappropriate, since with the inclusion of four players it's anything but. As you might expect, I spent as much time with the game as I could, and while the experience was always incredibly fun, it changed dramatically depending on who I was playing with. When competing against other North American journalists, the experience was usually a raucous free-for-all, as we'd race to grab Super Mushrooms and Fire Flowers, push each other out of the way to get the most coins, eat each other with Yoshi, and "accidentally" pick each other up and throw one another into pits of lava in order to get the high score. When playing with Japanese players, the experience was more cooperative, as we saved power-ups for whoever needed them most, helped each other across perilous rotating platforms and treacherous sand geysers, and were quick to free one another's characters from the bubbles they were encapsulated in after they reappeared following an unfortunate death. Typically themed Mario levels—grassy fields, blue-hued caves, icy plains, scorching deserts, undersea areas, trap-filled fortresses, and more—set the stage for fun, and the inclusion of new elements (such as a propeller suit for superhigh jumps and a penguin suit that allows you to freeze enemies and use them as platforms) filled me with the same wonder and excitement that the original Super Mario Bros. did many years ago. Admittedly, I did want to play as Princess Peach, but Bowser's probably kidnapped her again. On the other hand, the Koopa Kids are back! There's a good chance that productivity at the NP office will come to a standstill when this game hits at the end of the year. —**CHRIS H.**



Biggest DS Surprise



Golden Sun DS

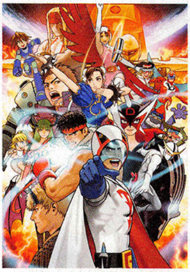
NINTENDO DS • NINTENDO • 2010

More than six years after Golden Sun: The Lost Age released for the Game Boy Advance, Nintendo and developer Camelot have finally unveiled the third installment in their venerable role-playing saga. Details on this 2010 release are scant, but a brief trailer showcased impressive 3-D environments and a variety of spectacular summon spells (which once again appear to be unleashed via Djinn that you collect). We also know that Golden Sun DS is set many years after the events of The Lost Age, with the son of previous hero Isaac taking center stage. It may not be as shocking as the return of a certain other franchise, but we're delighted to see Golden Sun rising once again. —**STEVE T.**

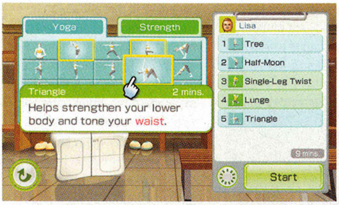
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars

Best Fighting Game

Wii • CAPCOM • WINTER 2009



The English version of Tatsunoko vs. Capcom didn't play any different from the Japanese version that we'd played previously, and that meant it was still incredibly fun. It was especially enjoyable to use Tatsunoko characters Karas and Tekkaman to beat the stuffing out of Steve's seemingly unstoppable duo of Ryu and Viewtiful Joe. **—CHRIS H.**



Helps strengthen your lower body and tone your waist.

Wii Fit Plus

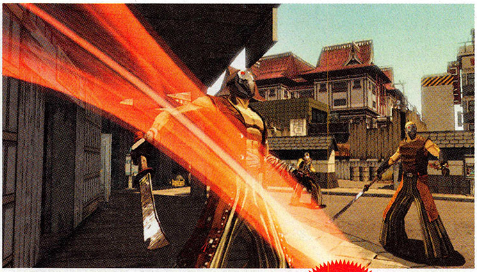
Best Workout

Wii • NINTENDO • FALL 2009

This update to Nintendo's multimillion-selling fitness phenomenon comes with some welcome enhancements. Most notable is that you can finally put together a full routine, either customizing your own based on how much time you have available or letting the game recommend a specialized workout that targets certain areas. When you're finished, you can check out approximately how many calories you've burned. The lack of such a framework was definitely Wii Fit's biggest shortcoming, so we're happy to see that remedied here.

In addition to all of the activities from the previous version, Wii Fit Plus includes six new strength and yoga exercises, as well as 15 new balance games. Our favorite of the bunch is Obstacle Course—as you run toward the goal, you have to avoid hazards by adjusting your speed and jump over barriers by quickly extending your legs. It's like getting the chance to *be* Mario, which, by the way, is a lot more exhausting than he makes it look.

You'll be able to pick up Wii Fit Plus this fall, either bundled with the Wii Balance Board or as a standalone disc. If you already own the original Wii Fit, don't worry about losing track of your progress; Wii Fit Plus will import all of your existing data. **—STEVE T.**



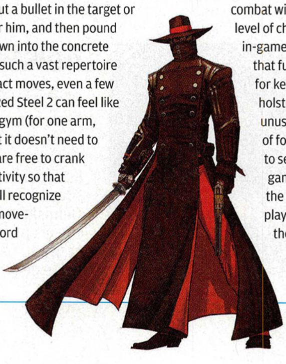
Red Steel 2

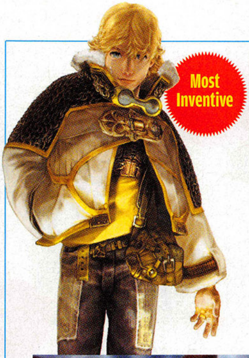
Most Improved Sequel (Ever?)

Wii • UBISOFT • HOLIDAY 2009

Red Steel 2 is exactly the sort of game I had in mind when Nintendo first unveiled the Wii Remote controller. But the original Red Steel didn't turn out the way that I (or its developers) had hoped, and neither did the half-dozen remote-as-sword games that followed. But now the Wii MotionPlus accessory has made the dream of 1:1 sword controls a reality, and it's every bit as satisfying as I had hoped. Thanks to the angular rate sensor packed into the Wii MotionPlus, Red Steel 2 had no trouble detecting both the angle and force of each swing, allowing players to swashbuckle nimbly with quick, targeted slashes or put some strength into it and unleash satisfying, armor-shattering thwacks. Parrying is easy and accurate; you can brandish your sword horizontally to deflect overhead strikes, vertically to block wide swings, or anywhere in between. With a variety of guns to mix into your combos, the basics are already plenty deep, but the development team is also promising a slate of advanced techniques to be unlocked as the game progresses. We were shown one in which the player could charge up a strike and then swing upward to knock a foe into the air, after which the player can either put a bullet in the target or leap up after him, and then pound him back down into the concrete below. With such a vast repertoire of high-impact moves, even a few minutes of Red Steel 2 can feel like a trip to the gym (for one arm, at least). But it doesn't need to be; players are free to crank up the sensitivity so that the game will recognize even slight movements as sword strikes.

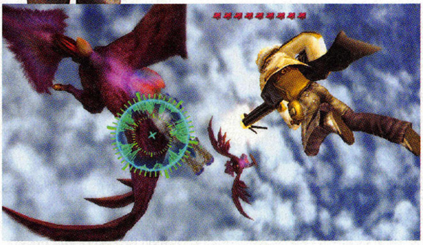
It isn't merely the technology of Red Steel 2 that's exciting—it's also the philosophy. Much of the potential of motion controls has been squandered by developers focusing on "accessible" amateur-friendly controls, interpreting any movement as a successful hit and allowing players to waggle their way through games with little skill or forethought. But Red Steel 2 is having none of that; it has a precise and challenging control scheme, and you can either learn it or you can die. It was one of the few E3 demos that was willing to dish out an ass-kicking to the casual crowd, forcing players to quickly assess threats and parry, evade, and strike in all directions. Of course, combat isn't the only attraction in Red Steel 2's crisply cel-shaded samurai-cowboy world; the game's large environments offer plenty of hidden nooks to explore, and even a cool safe-cracking sequence in which players can lift the remote to their ears to listen for the turning of tumblers. But most of Red Steel 2's depth seems to lie on the battlefield, with a rich variety of moves and cunning foes who won't part with their entrails without a fight. Players who do master the game's demanding combat will find yet another level of challenge in an optional in-game achievement system that further rewards them for keeping their guns holstered or defeating unusually large numbers of foes. It's a rare treat to see a motion-control game that aims to get the blood pumping in its players' brains as well as their arms. **—CASEY L.**





Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers

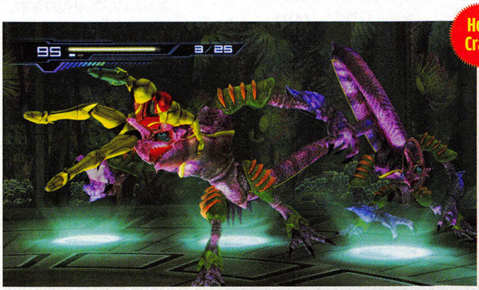
Wii • SQUARE ENIX • HOLIDAY 2009

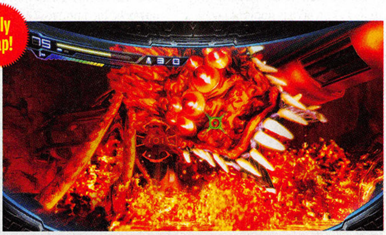


Crystal Bearer Layle has limitless powers of telekinesis and has yet to find a puzzle those powers can't solve. As I explored the game's large and beautiful Capital City, I found scores of things to target, lock onto, and yank with his signature ability. Want to read a newspaper? Grab one out of someone else's hands. Want to make some money? Pick up random villagers and shake it out of their pockets. Want to open a time-activated gate? Lock onto the hands of the clock and crank 'em in the right direction. Layle's telekinesis is intuitive and satisfying to use, and in a world packed with things to interact with, it's nearly limitless in potential. There were no spells, items, or pointless NPC conversations in the entirety of the lengthy Crystal Bearers demo—and once I got into the game's weird wavelength, I never missed 'em.

After being arrested for the crime of being a Crystal Bearer (the game plays this up as some sort of terrible injustice, as if I hadn't just committed several dozen felonies), Layle makes a bold escape on a chocobo-powered wagon, pursued by a heavily-armored chocobo cavalry. While a fellow felon steers, Layle can use his versatile powers to hurl the cavaliers off their mounts, toss objects into their paths, and even yank out bridge supports. The Crystal Bearers demo ends without ever visiting a traditional field or dungeon area, but producer Akitoshi Kawazu promised that the game will alternate between guided action sequences like the chocobo-cart chase, open-field areas with free exploration and optional high-level boss fights, and even activities such as social dancing.

Crystal Bearers may be the first action-RPG of the 3-D era to offer strong production values and play mechanics without borrowing heavily from the playbook of the Zelda series. We can't wait to dig deeper into this promising title in the months to come. **—CASEY L.**

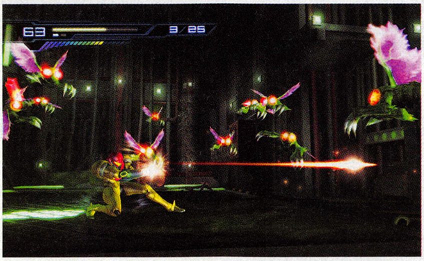




We're not sure exactly how it works, but Other M obviously alternates between a third- and first-person viewpoint.

Metroid: Other M

Wii • NINTENDO • 2010



Nothing at this year's show blew our collective socks off like the unveiling of Metroid: Other M. Series co-creator Yoshio Sakamoto and the folks who brought us Metroid Fusion have joined forces with Team Ninja (Dead or Alive, Ninja Gaiden) to deliver an epic new Metroid adventure unlike any other. Yes, please!

The two-minute debut trailer features both third- and first-person gameplay, and Team Ninja's involvement is readily apparent in the form of brutal, stylish action. At one point, Samus climbs atop a giant monster to blast its lone eye from point-blank range, and she later grabs a creature around the head and fires her cannon directly into its mouth. Our gal has never looked more badass.

What also stands out from the trailer is Other M's heightened emphasis on narrative, with lavishly produced and fully voice-acted CG cutscenes. The game takes place between Super Metroid and Metroid Fusion, and promises to shed new light on this storied universe and its legendary heroine. Unfortunately, that's pretty much all we know about Metroid: Other M, but (obviously) we'll keep close tabs on this one leading up to its release next year. In the meantime, you can check out the thrilling trailer for yourself at http://e3.nintendo.com.
—STEVE T.

Most Faithful

The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks

NINTENDO DS • NINTENDO • HOLIDAY 2009

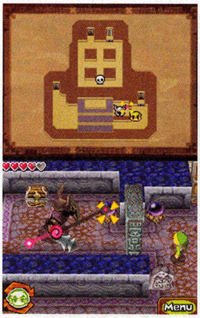
Firing up the demo of The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks feels like slipping into a good pair of well-worn shoes. The game looks, plays, and sounds just like its predecessor, 2007's Phantom Hourglass, but there were plenty of subtle twists to be found in its handful of demo areas.

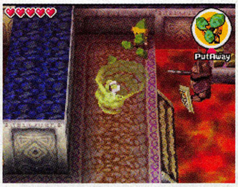
The sample dungeon featured the return of the Phantom Guardians that tormented Link to no end in the previous installment. But now they appear to be Link's staunchest allies, and the early floors of the dungeon centered around careful cooperation with one of these indestructible lunks. You guide it with the stylus, drawing movement paths that it will follow with complete obedience. Link could use the Phantom Guardians to ferry him across pools of lava, hit switches in inaccessible areas, and protect him from flame jets as they walk between Link and the deadly blasts.

The dungeon also featured the new Whirlwind item, a rotary fan made of Deku leaves that generates tornados when you aim it with the stylus and blow into the DS microphone. The E3 trailer revealed a second new item, a whip that Link can wield with a panache that suggests he may have a bit of Belmont blood in his veins. In addition to cracking it at foes, Link can use Indiana Jones-style tricks to swing across bottomless pits.

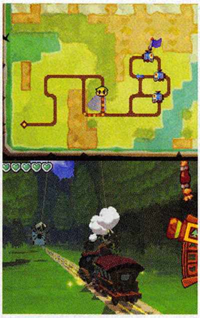
The soul of Spirit Tracks can be found on the rails that connect the major locations of the game, on which Link can ride his new steam-powered locomotive. The tools of the engineer's cab surround the bottom screen of the DS: there's a steam whistle you can pull to scare cows off the tracks, a throttle that can be rotated to adjust your speed, and a lever you can flip left or right to change your route in advance of forks. When riding the rails, the upper screen shows a route map where you can track the movements of enemy trains; you'll need to assess their speed and bearings to avoid crossing paths as you set your own course through the web of tracks.

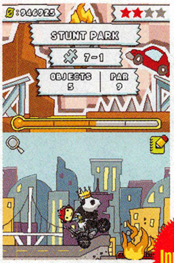
As with the sample dungeon, the train sequence had several new elements but felt quite similar to the sailing mechanic in Phantom Hourglass. I don't think anyone would mind a second helping of that game's strong gameplay and engaging quest, but hopefully the months before the holiday release of Spirit Tracks will provide a few more surprises than its overly familiar E3 debut. **—CASEY L.**





Why walk through lava when an invincible phantom can do it for you?



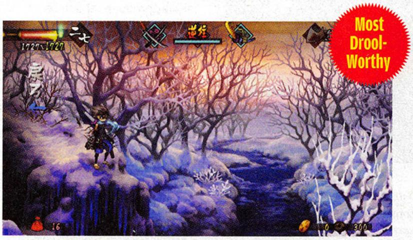


Most Innovative

Scribblenauts

NINTENDO DS • WBIE • FALL 2009

In 5th Cell's Scribblenauts, you can write any non-proper noun—with the exception of vulgarities—and have that object materialize to help you solve the game's puzzles. It works precisely as advertised, and may very well be the single greatest invention since the automobile. Hyperbole, you say? Consider this now-legendary tale from the show. You're faced with a horde of seemingly indestructible zombie robots, so you write "time machine" and travel to the past. There you find a dinosaur, which you can ride. You then hop back in the time machine, return to the present, and use your new prehistoric companion to stomp the zombie robots into scrap metal. We are in awe. **—STEVE T.**



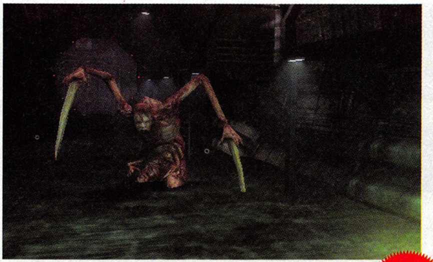
Yes, that is an actual screen shot of a real video game.

Most Drool-Worthy

Muramasa: The Demon Blade

Wii • IGNITION • FALL 2009

We covered Muramasa in great detail last month, but Vanillaware's gorgeously hand-drawn action-RPG deserves another shout-out as one of our most anticipated Wii games of 2009. It truly is a joy to behold, and the frame rate never chops or stutters as it did in Vanillaware's previous work, Odin Sphere. Though relatively simple, Muramasa's action is more satisfying than its predecessor's, as well; your protagonists leap across the screen and hack foes to pieces like only ninjas can. What's next for the studio? While we were chatting with director George Kamitani at the show, he mentioned he'd been working on character sketches for his next title back at the hotel, and that he had enough ideas for at least 10 more 2-D games. If they're anything like this one, George, keep 'em coming! **—STEVE T.**



Dead Space Extraction

Best Light-Gun Game

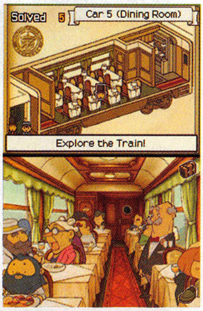
Wii • ELECTRONIC ARTS • SEPTEMBER 2009

Fans of the original Dead Space (available on Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3) may be disappointed with the relatively simplified mechanics of Dead Space Extraction, a prequel that drops the freedom to explore in favor of what its developers call a "guided first-person experience." But those who approach Extraction as a light-gun shooter should be thrilled with the layers of depth revealed in its E3 demo; simple puzzles (such as having to solder a circuit-board door lock while fighting off waves of foes), the ability to pick up and hurl objects, a dismemberment system that favors the surgical removal of legs and arms over headshots, and as-yet-unrevealed zero-gravity sequences are all radical new additions in a usually staid genre. Extraction builds tension by piling even more mechanics onto the gunplay, including a new active-reload system (in which a well-timed button press will cut your reload time by 75%), a light source that can be charged only with rapid shakes of the remote, and alternate modes of fire that are unleashed by turning your remote sideways. With so much going on, the frantic experience of battling Dead Space's bloodthirsty aliens makes the shambling zombies in your old Wii light-gun games feel as intimidating as Duck Hunt's clay pigeons. **—CASEY L.**

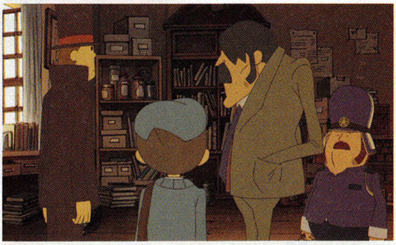
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box

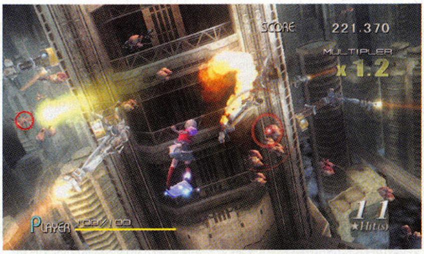
Most Puzzling

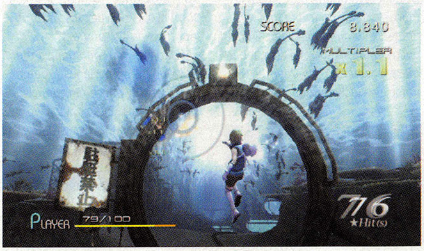
NINTENDO DS • NINTENDO • AUGUST 2009



At long last, Professor Layton makes his highly anticipated return. Like its predecessor, the game features great animation and a suitably mysterious story (about a box that allegedly kills anyone who opens it). The early puzzles (assembling a map, finding an apartment via clues, and identifying which key would fit into a lock) showed plenty of ingenuity, and they were so fun that I played through the demo twice. **—CHRIS H.**







Sin and Punishment 2

Most Frantic

Wii • NINTENDO • Q1 2010

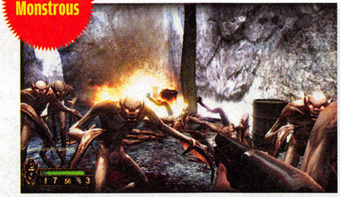
Sin and Punishment brought the thrills of a shooting game to the light-gun-deprived Nintendo 64, and made a big splash as the first import title on Virtual Console. Its Wii sequel sticks close to the original formula, putting you in control of a bullet-dodging hero (with your Nunchuk controller) and the crosshairs of his or her gun (with the remote). Your character has plenty of ways to dodge incoming fire, from jumping to rolling to hovering with a new jetpack, or even knocking the bullets away with a swipe from a sword. But tracking both your character and your crosshairs while you gun down your foes requires lightning-quick reflexes, especially since the game features a massive army of bullet-spewing foes and relentless level designs that never offer a spare moment to catch your breath. The camera moves fast, so you'll need to make snap decisions to figure out which foes are coming, which foes are going, and which foes pose the most immediate threat.

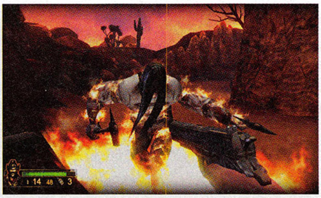
Outside of the ability to hover, a new alternate weapon that acts as a charge-up rocket launcher, and the option to upload your scores to an online leaderboard, the Sin and Punishment series hasn't evolved much. But despite the Wii console's already-rich library of shooters, the airtight level design and frantic action of Sin and Punishment 2 still make for a unique and thrilling experience. The only sin here is the delay from 2009 until the first quarter of 2010. **—CASEY L.**

The Grinder

Most Monstrous

Wii • TBD • 2010

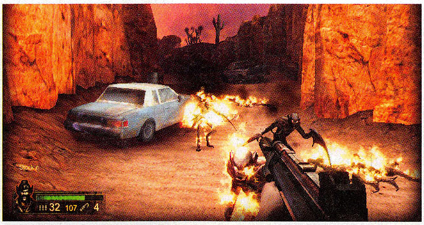


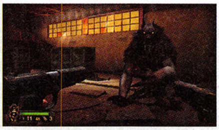


In my review for The Conduit last issue, I commented that I'd "love to see if High Voltage can take the next step and forge something truly special." Less than a month later, I may already have my answer. The Grinder, another Wii-exclusive first-person shooter, was one of the most impressive games at the show, and looks to improve on the developer's previous work in every way. The most exciting addition is an online co-op mode for up to four players. You and your compatriots play a group of freelance monster-hunters tasked with ridding a small town of zombies, vampires, and other assorted ghoulies. Each of the four selectable characters has unique skills and abilities, which you can upgrade throughout the game. A cool grindhouse aesthetic complements the technically impressive visuals, and a staggering number of enemies can swarm the screen at once.

In addition to the single-player and co-op modes, High Voltage promises that The Grinder will offer an even greater number of competitive online multiplayer options than did The Conduit. The developer claims that the customization options will be more extensive as well, though we have a hard time imagining how that's possible. Other improvements include a new adaptive AI system that should make enemies behave more intelligently, and environments that boast far more destructible elements.

Perhaps our favorite part of the demo, however, was a boss known as the Slasher. This hulking freak is clad in a straightjacket, wields two axes (which he occasionally throws at you), and is nearly impossible to bring down. To make matters worse, if you lose sight of him, he can suddenly appear behind you à la Jason Voorhees. It makes for an incredibly tense encounter, and gives us confidence that High Voltage indeed has something pretty special on their hands. **—STEVE T.**

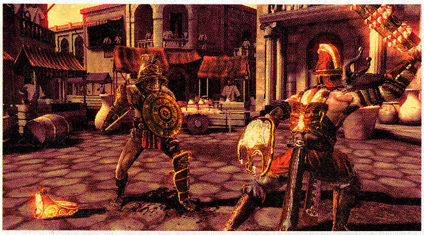


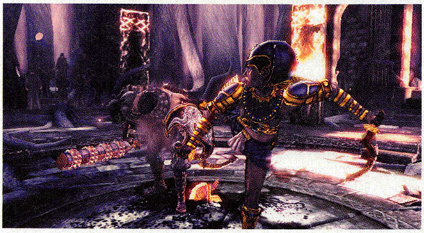


Gladiator A.D.

Most Brutal

Wii • TBD • 2010

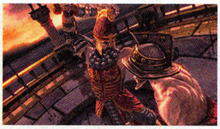




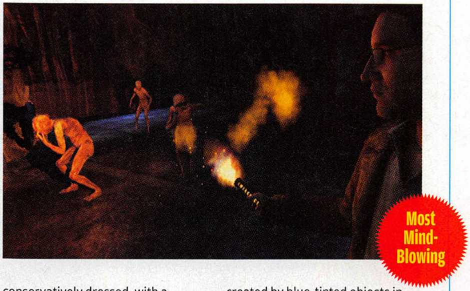
Alongside The Grinder, High Voltage unveiled Gladiator A.D., another Wii-exclusive title slated for some time next year. The first thing that struck us about this one-on-one fighter is how good it looks even at this early stage in development. Still screens really don't do it justice; the lighting, in particular, comes across much better in motion. We expect the game to sound fantastic, as well, thanks to a score by Jeff Beal, who previously composed the music for HBO's *Rome*. Inspired by Square Enix's classic Bushido Blade (PlayStation), the combat is more strategic than your typical fighter, with directional blocking, destructible armor, and all manner of environmental hazards. The game also includes light RPG elements, such as the ability to upgrade your weapons and armor or pay someone to poison your opponent before a bout.

Of course, the arena is all about entertaining the masses, and how you go about earning the crowd's favor affects your progress significantly. At the end of each contest, you can elect to show your foe mercy or execute a gruesome finishing move. The consequences of your decision aren't always readily apparent. In one example cited by High Voltage, declining to spare a certain female gladiator will cause prices to increase at the local blacksmith because it turns out she was his daughter.

Gladiator A.D. will support the Wii MotionPlus peripheral, but in what's quickly becoming a High Voltage trademark, you'll have complete freedom to customize the controls. That includes eschewing gesture controls entirely if you so prefer, and the game is even likely to support the Classic Controller. If only more developers would follow in these footsteps! **—STEVE T.**



Silent Hill: Shattered Memories



Most Mind-Blowing

Wii • KONAMI • FALL 2009

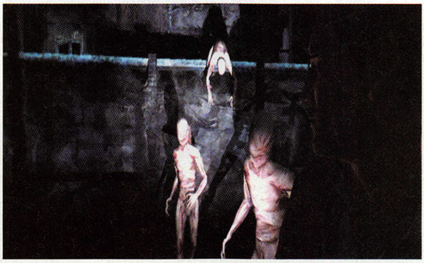
When it comes to opening a demo with an attention-grabbing moment, Silent Hill: Shattered Memories may never be topped. Mere moments after I stepped to the front of the line in a crowd of dozens, a digital psychiatrist demanded that I answer a very explicit question about my, uh... bedroom proclivities. It's not the sort of public embarrassment I expect when I pick up a Wii Remote, but Shattered Memories soon offered plenty of that sort, as well, forcing me to jerk my entire upper body in a variety of directions to simulate breaking free of a monster's choke hold. I can't help but assume that Konami was filming the whole thing and intends to pay for the game's impressive production values by blackmailing everyone who played the demo.

Nevertheless, I was back for more the next day, because Shattered Memories is just that compelling. For the first time since Silent Hill was abandoned by its original Japanese developers, the series is evolving in bold and interesting directions. The new first-person perspective and removal of combat solves all of the long-standing control woes, and the PDA full of maps and apps puts new options at your fingertips while removing the clumsy menus. The Wii motion controls are effective and fun, adding excitement to the monster attacks and a bit of novelty to the usual find-the-key and pull-the-lever puzzles. And Shattered Memories looks as good as it plays, with spooky flashlight lighting and a unique atmosphere, thanks to the bold decision to disperse the usual Silent Hill fog and decay in favor of snowstorms and flash freezes.

While having to fill out the psychiatrist's questionnaire in public was a tad humiliating, it did have a silver lining. By watching other players' experiences, I was able to get my first peek at how the psychological profiles affect the game. For example, when I first encountered police officer Cybil, she wore a tight shirt that was provocatively unbuttoned. Meanwhile, Steve's Cybil was conservatively dressed, with a tie and a thick winter coat, and a third player had Cybil wearing a SWAT-style uniform with a leather jacket and cap. In the final version of the game, some players may not even meet Cybil until much later. According to lead designer Sam Barlow, the psychological profiles that fuel these peculiar changes will continue to evolve throughout the game. "There aren't any other questionnaires, but you will have more sessions with the psychiatrist, and you'll do other activities—some really cool, interesting things."

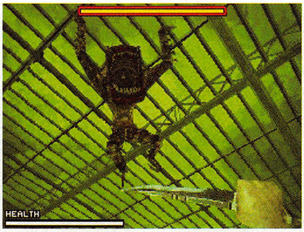
The demo ended with the first monster-attack sequence, in which I had to flee through the city, following a subtle path created by blue-tinted objects in the environment. But the monsters quickly teamed up to take me down, bringing my demo to an end. According to producer Tom Hulett, they're only going to get harder and more frightening. "This is the first nightmare sequence, so it's very simplistic. Later on, they'll be much more complex, and you'll have to solve puzzles in the middle of them."

I'm not sure if the psychological profiling will result in a richer game, or if a game built around fleeing can be a truly satisfying experience. But when Hulett's team is demonstrating so many new ideas and with so much success, it's easy to assume that they know what they're doing. The only thing I didn't love about the Shattered Memories demo was the big yellow arrows that point out every object you can pick up or interact with—they take the fun out of exploring and undermine the sense of immersion that the developers worked so hard to create. But I probably shouldn't complain about it too much, or Konami might retaliate by telling my editors about my drinking problem. Damn that shrink and his stupid questionnaire! **—CASEY L.**



Dementium II

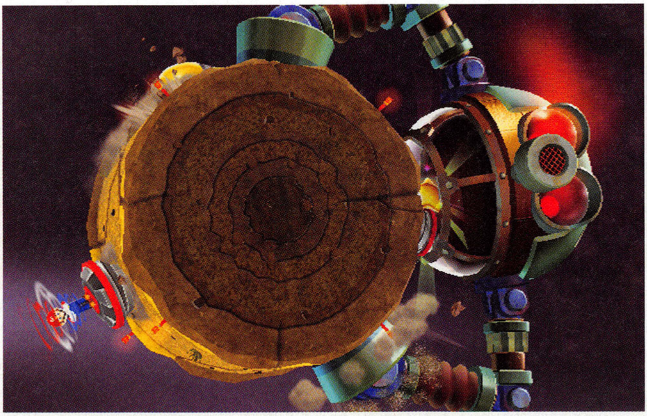
Most Disturbing

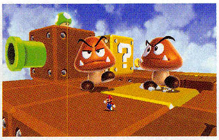


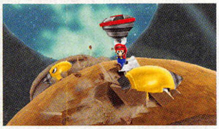
NINTENDO DS • SOUTHPEAK • Q1 2010

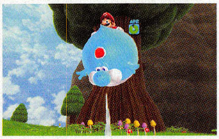
Horror is tough to pull off on a handheld, but developer Renegade Kid did a pretty good job of it with Dementium: The Ward for DS (we gave it an 8.5). Thus it came as no surprise when our first look at the sequel gave us a serious case of the willies. Dementium II is a direct continuation of the first game, which (spoiler alert!) took place entirely inside the protagonist's head. He finally wakes up at the beginning of this one, only to find that reality isn't much of an improvement.

The game begins in an asylum, and the impressive 3-D engine does a fantastic job of conveying your dingy, uncomfortable surroundings. Things get even creepier when you occasionally enter a "Hell" dimension reminiscent of Silent Hill, but improved melee combat and a new Castlevania-style map that tracks your progress on the bottom screen should help you survive. **—STEVE T.**







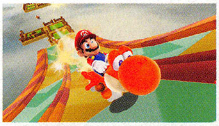


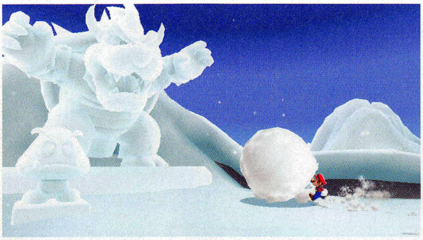
Super Mario Galaxy 2

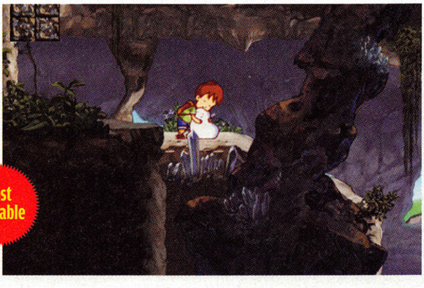
Biggest Applause

Wii • NINTENDO • 2010

Until now, no more than one 3-D Mario platformer has been released on any Nintendo console (Virtual Console aside), but that's going to change when Super Mario Galaxy 2 lands in 2010. Given that it's the sequel to Nintendo Power's 2007 Game of the Year and our overall top-ranked game on Wii (as of August 2008), to say that we're ecstatic is an understatement. Super Mario Galaxy 2 was shown only on video, but it looks like it will feature the same brilliance as its predecessor, with astoundingly vibrant graphics and breathtaking new galaxies, including a snow world with a magnificent Bowser ice sculpture, and a world where structures have the forms of giant cymbals and drums. Another world features beautiful, lush vegetation that springs up beneath Mario's feet. Perhaps the biggest addition is the inclusion of Mario's dinosaur pal, Yoshi, who has apparently learned some new tricks; he can grapple with his tongue and eat various types of fruit, allowing him to float, for example, or rapidly run up a steep incline (look out, Sonic!). Expect other new gameplay elements, too, including a drill that lets you dig underground and switches that affect the worlds in various ways, such as by slowing time or turning a water planet to ice. We've assuredly only scratched the surface of Mario's next intergalactic adventure. —**CHRIS H.**







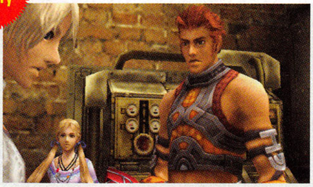
Most Huggable

A Boy and his Blob

Wii • MAJESCO • FALL 2009

A Boy and his Blob is 50 percent platforming, 50 percent puzzles, and 100 percent charm. Now that we've gone hands-on with the game, we know that transforming the blob into 15 forms to overcome obstacles and enemies is just as fun as we expected. Later levels are full of intense platforming segments light years beyond anything that was in the NES original, and the hand-drawn art is amazing; at some points the game features 10 layers of parallax. (In case that's gibberish to you, that means it looks really good.) On top of that, the game actually features a hug button to calm your blob when he's scared by enemies—it's absolutely adorable. Aiming your throws was a bit tricky in the demo, but if WayForward can address that, this should be a fantastic title. —**CHRIS H.**

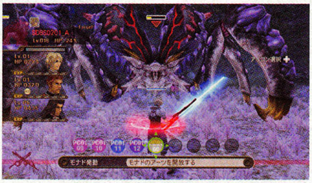
Biggest Mystery



Monado: Beginning of the World

Wii • NINTENDO • TBD

Think of Monado as the bonus B-side to Nintendo's conference; its name, a video, and a handful of screenshots were released along with all the newly announced games, yet it was never even mentioned at the show. All we know is that it's being made by Monolith Soft, the developer of the Xenosaga and Baten Kaitos series, and that it appears to be an epic-scale RPG with a three-man party and no transitions between exploration and combat. Hopefully, more information about this intriguing title will be available soon. **—CASEY L.**

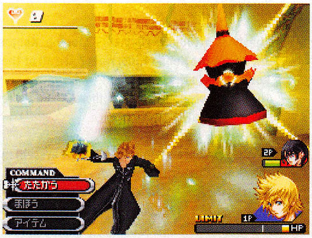


Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days

Best Cloaks

NINTENDO DS • SQUARE ENIX • SEPTEMBER 2009

After we spent so much time with Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days for last month's cover story, we didn't really need to play it again on the show floor, but the game's so impressive we couldn't pass it by. It's easily one of the best-looking and -playing DS games. **—CHRIS H.**

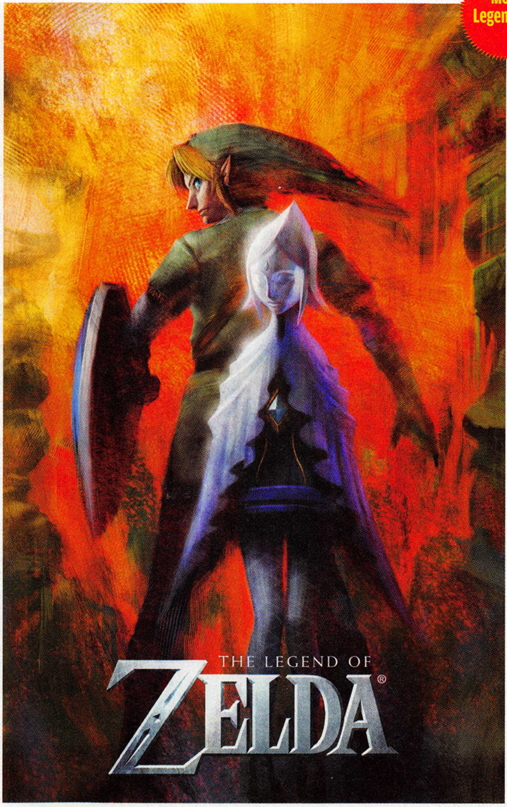


The Legend of Zelda

Wii • NINTENDO • TBD

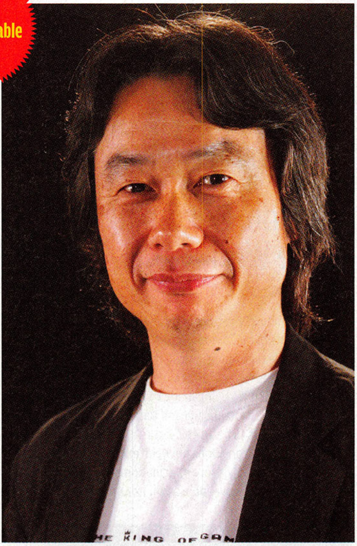
Nintendo made some big announcements at its E3 press conference, but one of the biggest came at a media briefing with Shigeru Miyamoto, held after the first day of the show: the unveiling of an all-new Legend of Zelda game for Wii. Granted, the game might not be out until after 2010, and all Nintendo had to show was one illustration, but any new Zelda is a cause for celebration. Nintendo representatives wouldn't confirm who the mysterious female character behind Link is, but her head sure is pointy—kinda like a sword—and her unique robes and belt have some sword-hilt-like properties. Miyamoto emphasized that he wants Zelda games to create personalized memories of the experience within each player, especially where dungeons and puzzles are concerned. Additionally, he stated that the Wii MotionPlus swordplay and archery found in Wii Sports Resort might be a lot like how those activities are handled in the next Zelda game; it's even possible that the next Wii Zelda will be played exclusively with the Wii MotionPlus accessory. Hopefully we won't have to wait long to find out more. **—CHRIS H.**

Most Legendary



A Conversation with Shigeru Miyamoto

Most Knowledgeable



E3 just wouldn't be complete without sitting down in Nintendo's suite to catch up with the one and only Shigeru Miyamoto, the developer responsible for Nintendo's biggest franchises and the mastermind behind the company's creative direction. We used the opportunity to delve deeper into the upcoming iterations of his most revered creations: New Super Mario Bros. Wii, Super Mario Galaxy 2, and the next Wii installment of The Legend of Zelda. —CHRIS H.

NINTENDO POWER **With all the announcements that we've heard at this E3, you seem like a very busy man right now. What are you spending most of your time on these days?**
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO Well, we just finished Wii Sports Resort, so right now New Super Mario Bros. Wii is taking up the majority of my time.

What's your role on that game?
Supervisor. Obviously, I'm looking at a wide variety of things, but making sure that Mario's basic controls, that functionality, works well. That's my job to bring all that together.

Which team is developing that game?
The same team that did Super Mario Advance and DS New Super Mario Bros.—the same team through all those. Mr. [Takashi] Tezuka and Mr. [Toshihiko] Nakago are part of that group. Mr. Nakago isn't one of those people that comes out to the front, but Mr. Tezuka is the main one.

What appeals to you about a multiplayer Mario game?
First of all, you know, when it comes to multiplayer, there's a lot of competitive multiplayer games. New Super Mario Bros. Wii is an experience that players will play together. Of course, we had the assist mode in Super Mario Galaxy that allowed two players to work together, but there's no four-player Mario game in the same space up until now. Traditionally with Mario games, when you fall off the level or you lose a life you go back to the beginning of the level, but with this game, because we have four people—or you can have up to four people—as long as one character is still alive and well, then you get to just start right back at the point where you were knocked off or you ran into an enemy, and it's really exciting to have that sort of cooperative notion and everyone working together toward that goal. Of course, there's also a variety of gameplay styles. You can do very competitive gameplay where you're just getting in each other's way, pushing each other into harm's way, trying to see who can get the high score—I think the game has a wide variety of gameplay styles available that are inherent within the system.

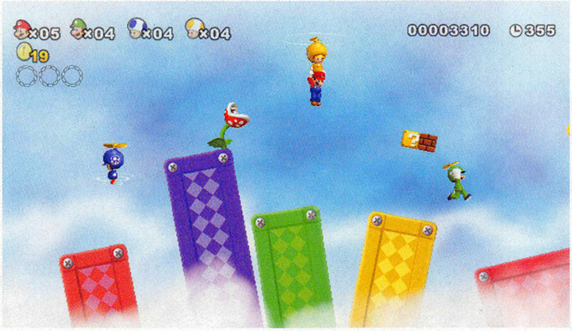
You've mentioned that you tried some multiplayer experiments with Mario in the past but ultimately gave up on them. Could you give some examples of those experiences?
One thing that didn't make it is that in Mario 64 we tried doing split-screen multiplayer with two players, but we ended up not adopting that.

How are the levels in New Super Mario Bros. designed for multiplayer gameplay?
We really didn't think about designing the courses or levels for multiplayer. They're designed for that single-player experience. But it's just fun to have more people playing together. We really didn't go out of our way to build anything specifically for multiplayer. I think the thing that we really had to focus on was kind of the opposite—we had a single-player mode, and all we had to do was make sure that within this level that it could be played with more. So we couldn't create anything that wouldn't allow us to put more than one character in there, and that was kind of tough. We've got that [auto-scrolling moving platform]—if you make that the normal size, of course, you can't get all four players on it; if you make it too big it's too easy. So looking at that, that's one of those things that we had to work on specifically because we have introduced the multiplayer.

Will there be playable characters other than Mario, Luigi, and the Toads?
That's it.

The boss I fought—that was Morton Koopa Jr., one of the Koopa Kids, right? Are all of the Koopa Kids in the game?
They're supposed to all be in there, yeah. We're still working on it!

I've heard there's some special new system in the game. Can you tell us about it?
It's actually an assist function. What it does is allow the player to let the computer take over if there's a section they're having trouble clearing, and the



computer will play through that section, and then when you're comfortable, you take control again, and you continue playing from that point. It's like playing with a really good friend—you just hand the controller to him. "I can't get past this stage!" Let them play through that part.

What can you tell us about New Super Mario Bros. Wii that you haven't told anybody else yet?
Well, you did see the penguin suit, but what you didn't see was how the penguin suit lets you move in water. That's something we haven't shown anybody yet. And one thing that I was going to show people at the roundtable but I completely forgot to do was that once you freeze an enemy you can actually pick that enemy up and throw that ice block. There are a lot of things that you can pick up and throw around, like [in] Super Mario Bros. 2.

So, regarding Super Mario Galaxy 2—is there anything that you weren't satisfied with in the original Super Mario Galaxy, and if so, how did you address that for the sequel?
I guess the only thing really disappointing was the fact that we weren't able to implement all of the ideas that we'd come up with. There were things that we had to just leave on the table, especially in regards to working with gravity. And there are places where I thought, "Boy, this would have been a great place to have a large number of stars." Just things like that that we weren't able to do. And, you know, our original plan was just to kind of go through and maybe do some implementations of some of the ideas that we left behind, but we really got into it and before we knew it we had just created a whole new game. But I think, as an action game, we have this time around created levels with more strategic depth to them.

Speaking of which, I heard Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime say that this game was geared more toward hardcore players. Is that extra depth what he was referring to?
Well, I do believe that there is a lot here to appeal to the more veteran and more experienced gamers, and I think it's a title that they will obviously enjoy, but I really took it into consideration and tried to do our best to create a game that's accessible to new gamers as well. And, you know, we also built it with the consideration that we believe that the people who played through the first Mario Galaxy have become better players. So for those people who haven't played Super Mario Galaxy, now is their chance to play that while they're waiting for Super Mario Galaxy 2.

Before I continue with my questions, I just want to say that the first Super Mario Galaxy is probably my favorite game from the last 10 years.
Then you will really like Super Mario Galaxy 2.

So what was that black-and-white effect we saw in the video?
We haven't revealed that yet, but maybe I can talk about it.... It's an effect where time slows down. There's a slowdown in time within the game—probably pretty much what you had expected.

Are these all-new galaxies you're visiting, or are some of them carrying over from the original game?
All-new galaxies. Some of the forms will be similar or maybe the same, like the comets that are traveling through, but the galaxies themselves aren't the same.

Are there new suits as well?
I wouldn't put too much emphasis on looking forward to seeing new suits at this point, but really Yoshi is the new element that we are focusing on right now.

We've heard from a lot of people who are under the impression that the next console Zelda game is going to be something radically different from what we've seen in the past. Is that the case?
No, I don't think it's going to be that radically different. Accessible gameplay. Something that we're going to look at focusing on within that 3-D realm is really highlighting the things that are important within the Zelda franchise—the actions that Link can take. I think it's easy to maybe overthink it because you're in that 3-D realm of all the different things you should be doing or try to be doing, and really what's important to understand is what's available to you, and just focus down on what's best suited for that rather than just trying to implement a whole bunch of different things.

The artwork that you showed for the upcoming Wii Zelda title seemed a lot like the art for Twilight Princess. Are you going to carry over Twilight Princess's art style?
I don't think it's going to change dramatically. We are doing it on the Wii [console]. That being said, we can look at Twilight Princess—it was built to run on both GameCube and Wii, and this one will be running only on Wii, so I think there will be differences inherent to the fact that it's only on this platform.

And, of course, everyone wants to know exactly who that female character is in the illustration.
Yeah, that's probably the most important part of that artwork. I really can't talk too much about [it]; one thing that's important to note in that artwork, though, is that Link is carrying a shield, but that's all he's carrying.

I was just going to ask, actually! I don't suppose you can go on record with an official explanation?
That's correct. I can't. That's why we only showed you one drawing. [Zelda series director] Mr. [Eiji] Aonuma would be very angry with me.

Now, before you showed the image, you talked about wanting everybody to have unique, personal memories of their adventures in Hyrule. Is that something you're actually trying to implement in the game—a personalized Zelda experience for every player?
Every person's own individual experiences with the game should be unique and [be] their own sort of "My Zelda" experience, and I think that's superimportant, and we have to look at that when we're creating dungeons and how we can make that come true. So we're spending a lot of time concentrating our efforts in that area. But it's not going to become individual: "Hi, I'm this Zelda!" or "I'm this Zelda!" or "I'm this Link!" or whatever. The experience will be unique but within this world that we've defined.

And, of course, I have to ask: have you given any thought to putting a new Kid Icarus game on Wii or DS?
Wait, please. I'm really surprised how popular that is. But you are the first person to ask at this E3!

Peach goes missing, Bowser swallows the Mario bros., and everyone in the Mushroom Kingdom is bloating up into balloons—and that's just the first ten minutes of the ridiculously awesome Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story.

BY CHRIS SLATE

No Guts, No Glory

It speaks to the strength of Nintendo's E3 showing that most Mario fans won't remember the event for its fully playable version of Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story, the latest game in the fan-favorite handheld action-RPG franchise. The title wasn't a surprise reveal like New Super Mario Bros. Wii, or the wish-fulfilling dream sequel that is Super Mario Galaxy 2. But in at least one way, Bowser's Inside Story stands shoulder-to-shoulder with its headline-grabbing cousins—Mario fans are going to absolutely love it.

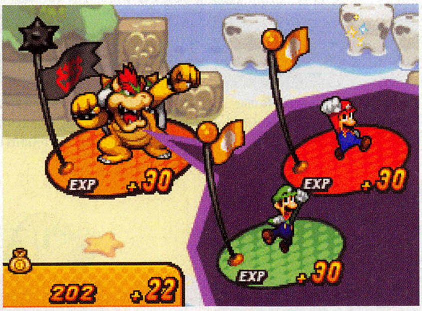
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga, the series' debut title, which appeared on the Game Boy Advance, introduced us to a bigger, stranger, and funnier world of classic Mario characters where both bros. were controlled simultaneously and used team-up techniques to explore and do battle. Its first sequel, Partners in Time, took the concept two steps further by adding Baby Mario and Baby Luigi, thereby upping the player's concurrent control of characters from two to four. For Bowser's Inside Story, the babies are out and Mario's fire-breathing archenemy is in. As in the previous games, the A Button is used to attack and dodge with Mario, B is used for Luigi, and now X and Y belong to Bowser, and are used to punch and to blow flames, respectively.

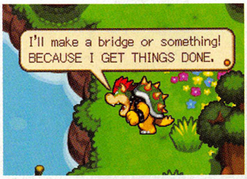
Having Bowser and our heroes fight on the same side is strange enough, but the game pushes into an entirely new realm of weirdness by trapping a miniaturized Mario and Luigi inside of the Koopa king's body. While playing, you stomp around as Bowser on the Nintendo DS system's top screen, and at any time you can press A or B to zoom inside him and swap control for Mario and Luigi, who appear on the bottom screen. The game's genius lies in how the adventure takes place both inside and outside of Bowser, and how actions and events in one area impact the other. For example, when Bowser's fire breath goes on the fritz, it's up to Mario and Luigi to find and fix the internal blockage. And when Bowser uses a special attack to inhale an enemy, the fight continues with the bros. once the enemy joins them inside. The premise opens up a world of fresh new possibilities while retaining everything that made the series fun in the first place.

Another cool change introduced in Bowser's Inside Story is that, while Bowser explores the world from the series' standard RPG-style overhead view, the internal world that Mario and Luigi navigate scrolls along in 2-D just like the pair's legendary platform games. It's always exciting to jump around in classic-style Mario environments, and the alternating play types add more variety to the game. And speaking of variety, in certain scenes you even get to hold the DS sideways to play as a giant-sized Bowser, sliding the stylus to throw thunderous punches, and blowing into the microphone to rain fire down upon your enemies. Numerous button- and stylus-based minigames also pop up from time to time to ensure that there's always a new surprise waiting around the corner.

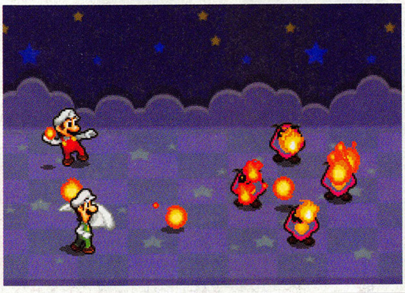
But beyond the numerous gameplay types, the addictive action-infused turn-based battles, and the full-on fan service found in the familiar locations and cameos across the Mushroom Kingdom lies what is possibly the game's best quality: its humor. The Mario & Luigi series is well known for its oddball characters and silly dialogue, and in what we've played of Bowser's Inside Story so far, it looks to take things to a whole new level of crazy fun.

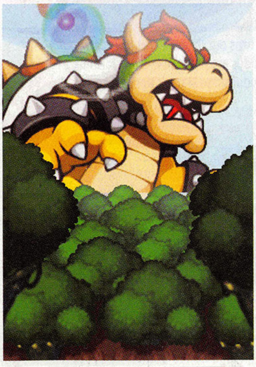
Unfortunately, we've got a little wait ahead of us before the game ships this fall, but you can turn the page *right now* for a special sneak peek at the great adventure. Enjoy!

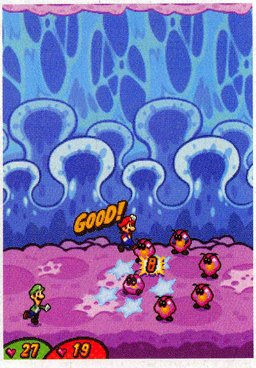




From story to puzzles to combat, everything shines in the new M&L.



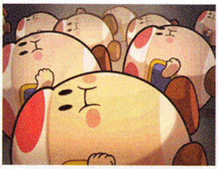




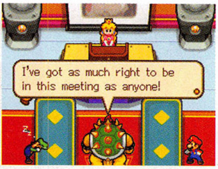
PLATFORM **NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER **NINTENDO** | DEVELOPER **NINTENDO/ALPHA DREAM** | RELEASE **FALL 2009**

The Adventure Begins!

We've had the chance to experience the first leg of Mario and Luigi's new adventure, and now you can too! We've summarized our playthrough over the next few pages to give you a strong impression of what the game is like, without spoiling the funniest lines or divulging the solutions to puzzles or boss fights. This is just the start of what's in store when Bowser's Inside Story hits this fall.

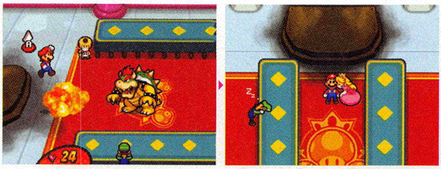


The story begins when the Mushroom Kingdom is plagued by a mysterious new disease, "The Blorbs."

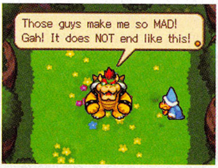


I've got as much right to be in this meeting as anyone!

Peach, of course, turns to our mustachioed heroes, but Bowser shows up wanting in on the action, too.

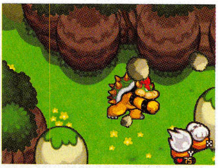


Boys will be boys, and Mario brushes up on the series' action-RPG battle system. Well-timed button presses dodge attacks and add extra oomph to Mario's head hops. Bowser gets humiliated (again) while Luigi takes a nap.

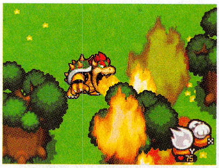


Those guys make me so MAD! Gah! It does NOT end like this!

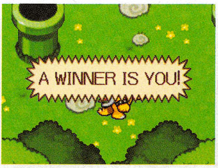
Peach unceremoniously tosses Bowser into the nearby woods.



At this point, you take control of Bowser and start smashing (via X)...

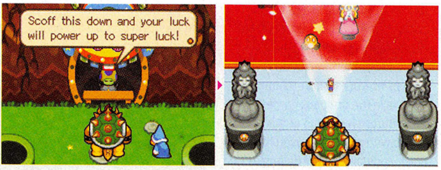


...and burning things up (via Y). Bowser's all about the power moves.



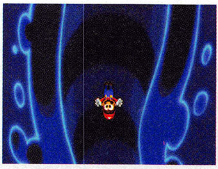
A WINNER IS YOU!

Suddenly, the writers sneak in one of the geekiest video game quotes of all time, and we love them for it.

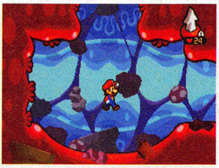


Scoff this down and your luck will power up to super luck!

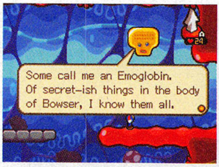
A stranger tempts Bowser with a mysterious mushroom to help him defeat Mario, and the Koopa King's limited brainpower fails him yet again. He becomes a walking vacuum, returns to Peach's castle, and sucks everyone in!



Mario is separated from the others as he is pulled into Bowser's bowels (eww).

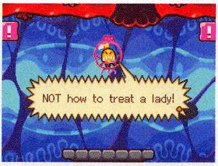


It turns out that the crabby king's insides are made of 2-D platforming goodness, so Mario's good to go.



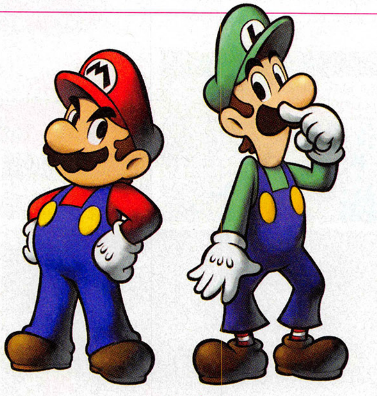
Some call me an Emoglobin. Of secret-ish things in the body of Bowser, I know them all.

Mario meets his first Emoglobin, peculiar proteins that give tips, save the game, and say "globin" a lot.



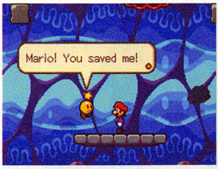
NOT how to treat a lady!

Next Mario finds a captive Starlow, a star sprite who had visited Peach to help her research the Blorbs.

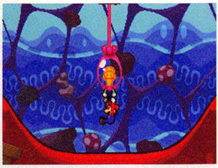


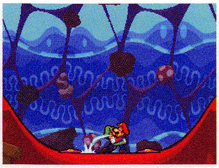
PROFILE: Mario Bros.

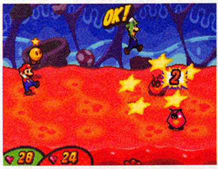
You've heard of these guys, right? They've been in a few games. Mario (he's, uh, the one in red) and Luigi (green) work together with wacky team-up moves that allow them to pummel foes and explore the game world.


Mario! You saved me!

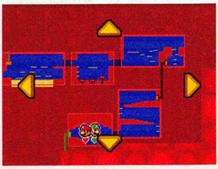
With one quick hop-'n'-bop, Mario busts the blob that held Starlow.

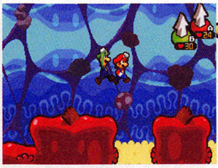

The two journey forward together and soon find Luigi with his head up...er, something.


The bros. are reunited in the game's most tender Oscar-worthy moment...

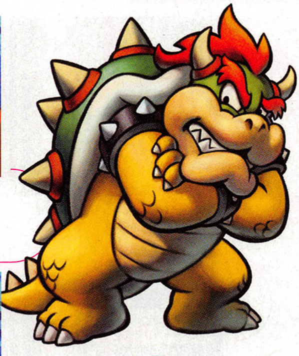


...and then it's fightin' time! Mario's actions are always controlled with the A Button; Luigi's with B.

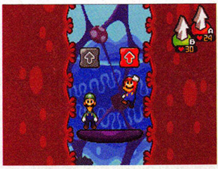

Pressing Select brings up an incredibly useful map (you'll check it a lot).



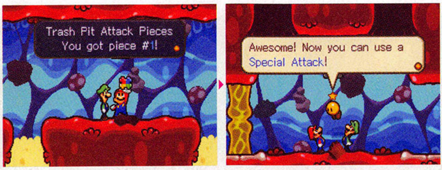
Since A and B control each bro independently, you have to press both simultaneously to clear pits.


PROFILE: **Bowser**

In the Mario & Luigi series, Bowser isn't exactly evil; just really, really grouchy. With Peach, the bros., and more trapped inside of him, he has no choice but to join the adventure.

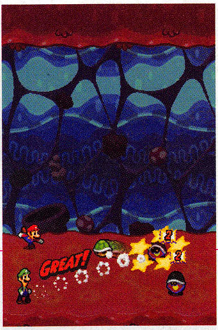


Special actions are sometimes required, such as alternating brick bops to lift this elevator.

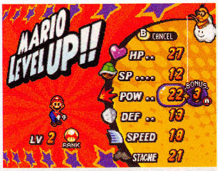

Trash Pit Attack Pieces
You got piece #1!

Awesome! Now you can use a Special Attack!

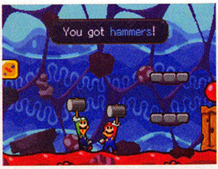
Collecting 10 Attack Pieces will earn you a new special move, so you'll always want to search an area thoroughly to be sure you've found them all.



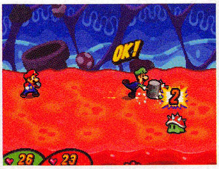
The first special attack lets Mario and Luigi kick a shell between them, hitting the bad guys after each turn.



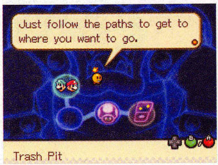
Is this the most grandiose level-up screen ever, or what?


You got hammers!

The journey continues until you find hammers. They have multiple uses, such as breaking open crates and...

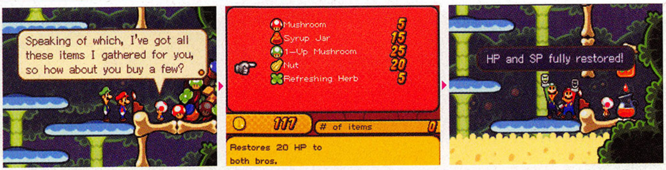


...breaking open hard-shelled enemies. Trust us; you *don't* want to jump on anything that has spikes.


Just follow the paths to get to where you want to go.

Trash Pit

The first zone inside Bowser is cleared, and you're shown how to switch between areas.


Speaking of which, I've got all these items I gathered for you, so how about you buy a few?

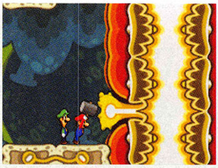
Mushroom	5
Syrup Jar	15
1-Up Mushroom	25
Nut	20
Refreshing Herb	5

111 # of items 0

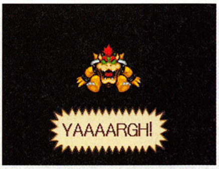
Restores 20 HP to both bros.

HP and SP fully restored!

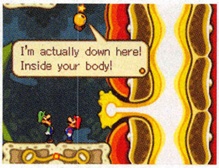
Toad Square is your next stop, where Peach's royal subjects will give you helpful items—for cash. Rat-finks! You'll return here often to heal, stock up on useful items, and question why you're bothering to save these moochers.



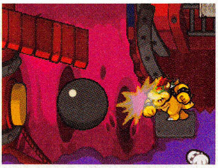
Upon leaving Toad Square, you come across an exposed nerve. Why not hit it with a hammer?



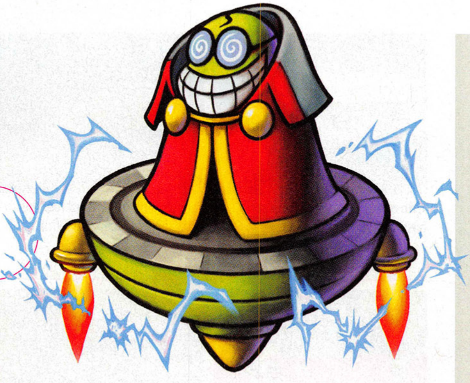
Yep, that's what we thought it'd do.


I'm actually down here! Inside your body!

Now that you've got Bowser's attention, Starlow lets him know that he has guests inside him.

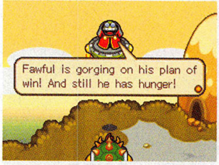


Controlling Bowser again, you take out his frustration on a puzzle to open a door.

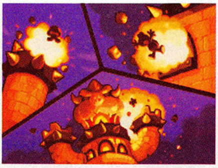


PROFILE: **Fawful**

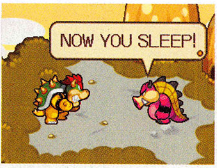
After starring as the main villain in the series' first title, Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga, Fawful took time off from evildoing to cameo in Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time as the shop owner of Fawful's Bean 'n' Badge. Everything he says is comedy gold, so we're thrilled to have him back.


Fawful is gorging on his plan of win! And still he has hunger!

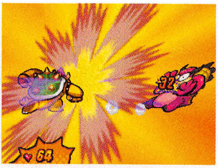
Further on, you come across the stranger who gave Bowser the mushroom—Fawful! This guy rocks!



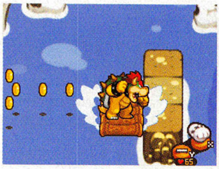
With hilarious dialogue, Nintendo's funniest villain reveals that he has captured Bowser's castle.


NOW YOU SLEEP!

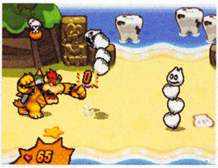
Fawful isn't the browniest bad guy, however, so he calls in his pink, piggish minion, Midbus.



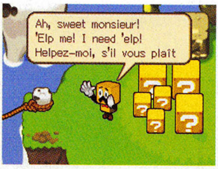
Bowser can't win this fight, but this screenshot looks pretty awesome.



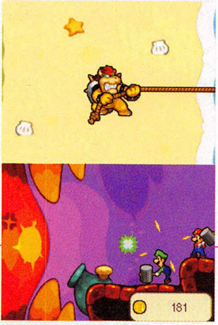
Having now lost two big fights early in the game, Bowser wanders on and enjoys a lovely raft ride...



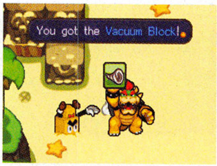
...but coin-earning bonus games can suppress his rage for only so long.


Ah, sweet monsieur!
'Elp me! I need 'elp!
Helpez-moi, s'il vous plaît

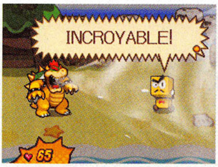
Next we meet Broque, a talking block with a French accent and a mustache. Y'know, Joe Average.



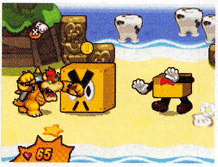
As Mario and Luigi, you knock sparks against Bowser's muscle to help him pull Broque's island to shore.


You got the Vacuum Block!

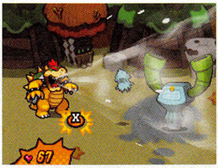
Saved (kind of), Broque hands over a Vacuum Block!


INCROYABLE!
65

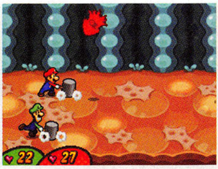
He helps Bowser test out the block's snazzy powers, which are, as Broque says, "Incroyable!"



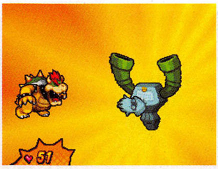
Then he grows and his head flips so that his mustache becomes angry eyebrows, and you fight. Weird.



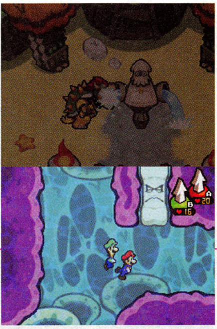
Next up is a pipe statue that is controlled by a bullying Blooper. Tap X quickly to inhale...



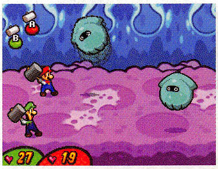
...and the Mario bros. can take a whack at him. The Blooper is knocked off the top of the screen...



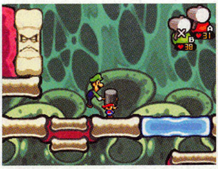
...gets spit out into its own body, and receives a well-deserved follow-up punch from Bowser.



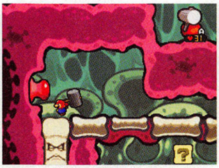
The statue becomes immobile and spouts water, and when Bowser drinks, his insides are flooded.



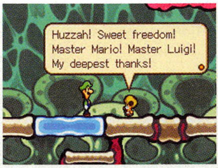
New enemies attack Mario and Luigi as they swim to previously inaccessible areas.



You soon learn how to become small to fit through tight spaces (ouch!).

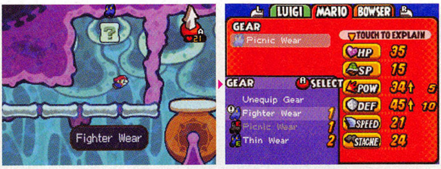


Mario apparently feels no pain, and while squashed, can swing his own hammer to strike hidden nerves.



Huzzah! Sweet freedom!
Master Mario! Master Luigi!
My deepest thanks!

Hitting the right nerve releases a trapped Toadsworth, who lives to worry about the princess.



Fighter Wear

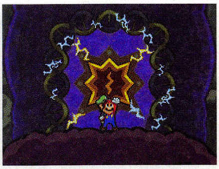
L LUIGI MARIO BOWSER R

GEAR
Picnic Wear

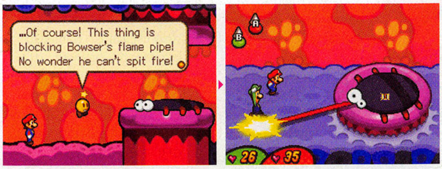
TOUCH TO EXPLAIN
HP 35
SP 15
POW 34↑ 5
DEF 45↑ 10
SPEED 21
STACHE 24

GEAR Ⓐ SELECT
Unequip Gear
Fighter Wear 1
Picnic Wear 1
Thin Wear 2

As you would expect in a good RPG, stat-boosting items can be found in out-of-the-way places, even inside a giant talking turtle monster. "Picnic Wear" may feel comfortable, but "Fighter Wear" feels more manly.

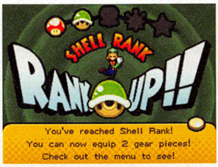


More swimming and puzzle-solving eventually open up the next area.



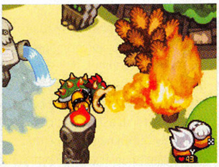
...Of course! This thing is
blocking Bowser's flame pipe!
No wonder he can't spit fire!

Bowser hasn't been able to fire up for a while, and here's why: a big bug is blocking his flame pipe! And who unclogs pipes better than anyone? After avoiding a few flying attacks and a lashing licker, the bros. stomp this bug.



You've reached Shell Rank!
You can now equip 2 gear pieces!
Check out the menu to see!

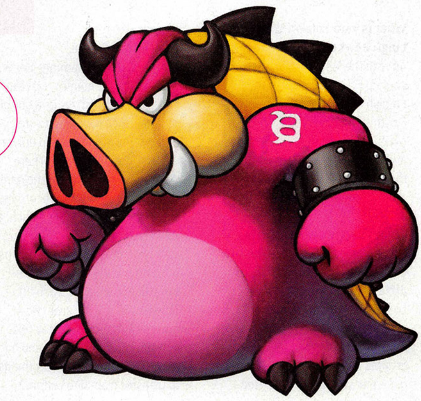
After a big boss battle like this, Luigi's Shell Rank goes up, allowing him to equip two pieces of gear.

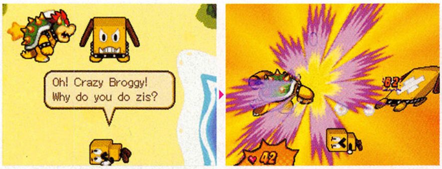


Meanwhile, Bowser happily roasts trees again to reach blocked paths.

PROFILE: **Midbus**

Midbus seems about as bright and brawny as Bowser, but instead of working to conquer a kingdom of his own, he works for Fawful.





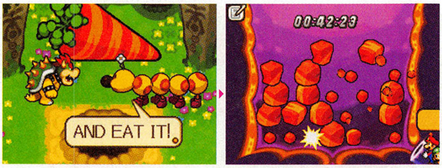
The Koopa king travels on until he meets Broque again, who is having trouble handling his massive pet, Broggy. The only way to bring the dog under control is to have a boss fight, and Bowser is happy to help.

BUY
SELL
EXIT SHOP

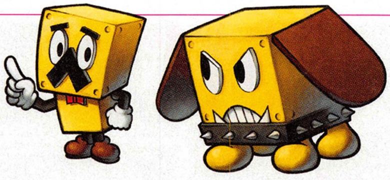
Afterward, Broque opens up shop. We knew this guy would come in handy!

Right! And now we take back my castle!

Moving on, Bowser finds and rescues some of his minions. They have a cannon, but need ammo.



Bowser finds a titanic carrot that could work, but unearthing it angers the local farmer. He's forced to eat the carrot in under a minute, so Mario and Luigi have to keep his stomach empty by breaking down the falling bites.



PROFILE: **Broque & Broggy**

Together with his monstrous pet Broggy, Broque—collector of block-shaped kittens called Blittens—might be the game's best new character.

INTERVIEW **NATE BIHLDORFF**

Laughing Matter

Nate Bihldorff didn't come up with every joke for the Mario & Luigi games, but he handled their delivery. As a part of Nintendo of America's localization department, which is responsible for the translation of Japanese games for the North American audience, Nate has rewritten or newly invented every line of dialogue that appears in Bowser's Inside Story. That's a gargantuan task for a text-heavy RPG like this, but one he seems to relish. Since the series is famous for its humorous dialogue, we talked with Nate to get the...well, inside story.

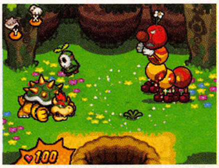
What is your role on Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story?
As with the last two Mario & Luigi games, I was responsible for the English localization of the game. For this one, I worked with two excellent translators, Lars Knudsen and Derek Seklecki—they translated the original Japanese text files and I rewrote them.

What exactly does localizing these games entail, and how is your approach to these titles different than other games?
Localization on these games is pretty basic. Obviously, there's the text—any bit of menu text, dialogue, graphic text, or the like needs to be translated and rewritten to appeal to the American audience. [There is] tons of naming—items, gear, badges, enemies, places, characters—which takes a fair bit of time, since you need to stay consistent with the Mario universe while still staying fresh. There was also some voice for the game, so we hopped into the recording studio with Mario, Luigi, Peach, and Bowser—mostly recording roars and "woohoos" and stuff like that, but also lines like the gibberish the bros. use to speak to each other. These titles are different from most simply because they're so jam-packed with humor, and humor is one of the most difficult things to transfer from one culture to another. What's hilarious in Japan may not even make sense to our audience, so there's quite a bit of work involved in making jokes funny while still remaining true to the original author's intent. In most cases this involves massaging Alpha Dream's characterization a bit, but in other cases it requires us to rewrite jokes wholesale.

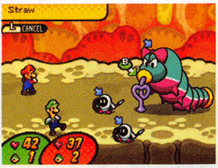
The Mario & Luigi and Paper Mario games are well known for having humorous plots and exceptionally funny dialogue. How much of that is in the original Japanese scripts, and how much is added during the localization process?
Oh, believe me, most of it is the original Japanese. Alpha Dream is extremely talented at creating bizarre situations and bringing them off with comedic flair. So many of the scenes work because of the hilarious sprite work by the character artists, great comic timing by the animators, and the underlying funny framework of the script. With such a solid foundation to work on, it's easy to apply the final coat of paint—I love over-the-top characterization, and adding it onto the denizens of the Mushroom Kingdom never gets old.

As an example, there are these things called Emoglobins inside Bowser's body—they frequently act as guides the help you along, and they're just plain weird in Japanese. They add "-ish" onto words that have no business having a suffix, and frequently attach a "-binbinbin" to other words. I wanted to stick close to the Japanese, so I stuck in some "-ish" work, but once I decided to call them Emoglobins, I thought it'd be funny to capitalize on the emo part, so I started giving them this overly dramatic speech style. And after trying the "-binbinbin" angle and not liking it that much, I wrote a few lines with the word "globin" taking the place of another, more appropriate word. Y'know, like "Walk a mile in my globin," or "All's well that ends globin." It struck me as ridiculous, which is a good thing, and after that, the globins started flying fast and furious.

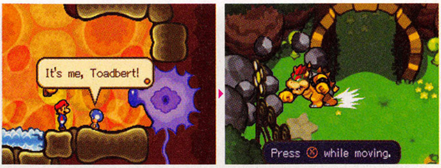
How would you describe the Mario & Luigi brand of humor?
Unapologetically silly. One thing I love about this series is you can just tell that the developers had



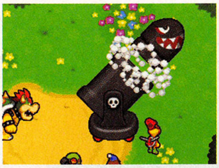
Bowser eats the carrot but the Wiggler still attacks. It's a tough fight, immediately followed by...



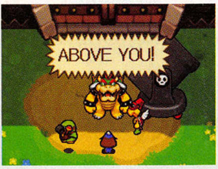
...a second boss battle inside Bowser's stomach. The worm had been in the carrot, and it's angry.



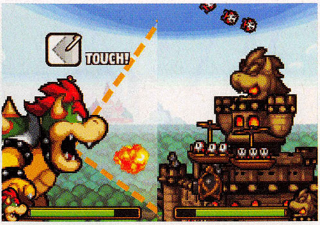
Afterward you bump into Toadbert, who has found a nerve connected with Bowser's arm. By whacking it, you give big ugly a dashing punch that can break strong rocks.



Bowser, having taken a Banzai Bill from the beaten Wiggler, launches an attack on his former castle.



Fawful has made some upgrades to the castle, however, and the building flies over to crush its former owner.



With inside help from the Mario bros., Bowser grows large enough to fight the castle hand to hand, during which the DS is held sideways. And that's all we'll spill for now!

huge smiles on their faces as they were creating it, and I hope American players can tell that I did, too. There's nothing I hate more than games that take themselves too seriously—I think the best games are simply fun, stripped of pretension.

As someone who writes for Mario, Luigi, Bowser, and Peach, what insight can you give us on those classic characters? What characteristics would you say distinguish them from each other?
Well, they're not exactly subtly nuanced in the Mario & Luigi games. Mario is game for anything—afraid of no challenge, unflappable, and heroic. Luigi's shown traces of bravery in other games, but not this series—he tends to succeed in spite of his own cowardice. Bowser is a villain, pure and simple. He's greedy, impatient with his minions, and convinced that he's always the biggest, baddest dude in the room. And Peach is what you'd expect from a princess—royal, regal, and reserved.

In Bowser's Inside Story, can we look forward to the return of any of the series' memorable scene-stealing cameo characters, such as the Hammer Bros.?
Every game in the series has had unforgettable cameos, and this one is no different. There are two in particular that I love, and people will know when they find them. The first is a section of the game that should remind Mario fans of a certain enemy from World 5-3 of Super Mario Bros. 3. The second one I'm not going to elaborate on, other than to say this—deep below Bowser Castle is a secret chamber that has nothing to do with the main plot, but holds a terrible, chilling secret...and a prize.

Which new gameplay aspects in Bowser's Inside Story do you think players will enjoy the most?
I think people will love the 2-D Mario and Luigi sections inside Bowser's body, but more than that, I think people are just going to love playing as Bowser. He provides this visceral thrill as he bludgeons his way through everything—a far cry from Mario and Luigi's nimble acrobatics. All of his special attacks are performed by his minions, and using the touch screen to activate them feels flawless. Not only that, but there are several battles where Bowser grows to enormous size, and players have to turn the DS on its side to fight. Those are absolutely awesome.

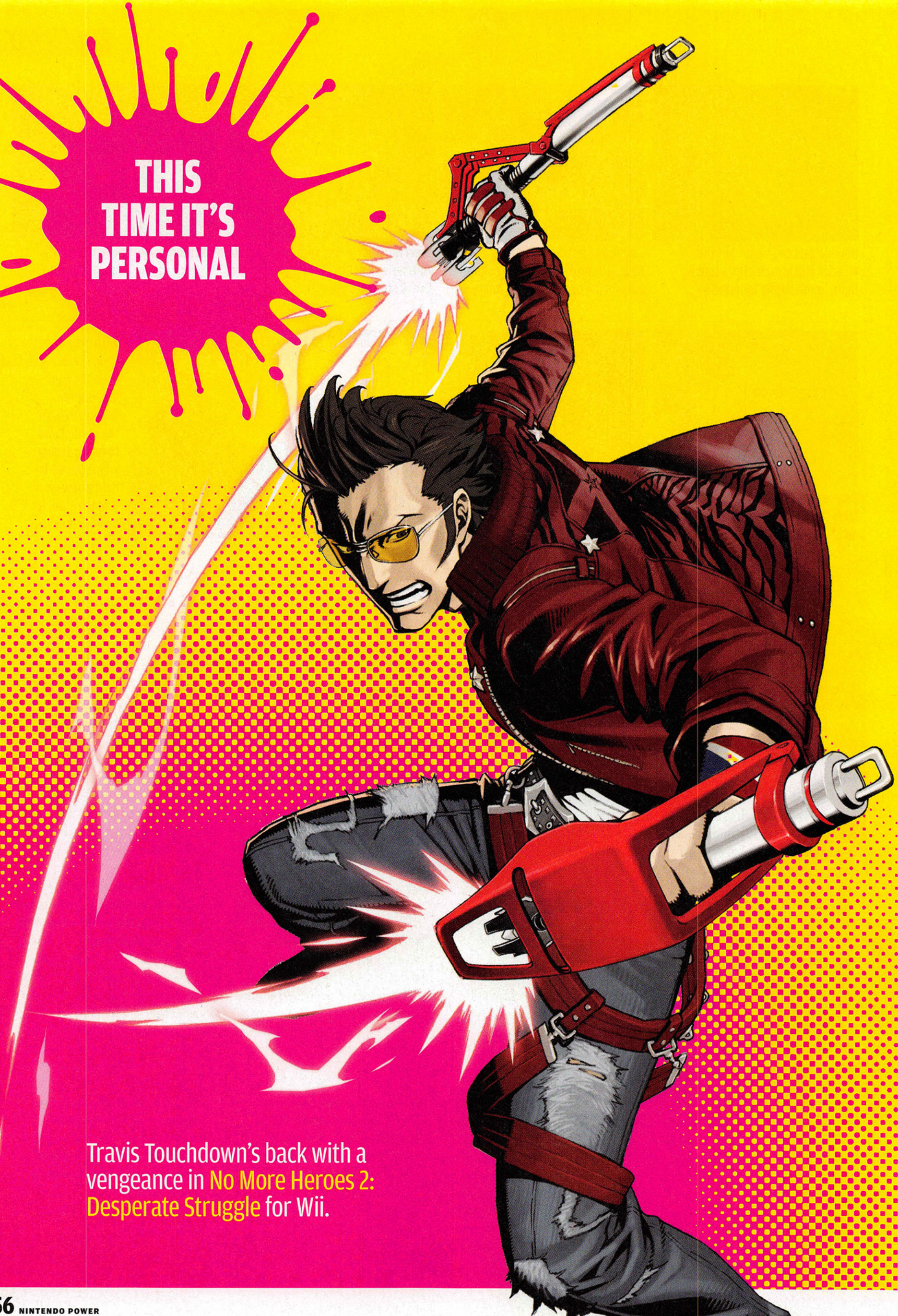
Do you have any favorite lines of dialogue from the previous M&L titles?
I love anything Fawful says, of course, just because he's so ridiculous. I don't remember it exactly, but I liked that one line when he compared Mario and Luigi's lives to a "caricature of a cartoon drawn by a kid who is stupid," or something along those lines. Also, when he spots Luigi in the dress—something about [his line] "Yes. Mustache." gets me every time. In Partners in Time, my favorite line was actually an audio clip—whenever Luigi went "BABIES!" I cracked up for some reason.

We know that you enjoyed writing for Fawful in Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga. Are you happy to have him back in a prominent role in Bowser's Inside Story?
So happy. One of the toughest parts of the last game was the fact that the Shroobs didn't speak a translatable language—villains are always the most fun to write for. Fawful is awesome because he's already pretty bizarre in the Japanese [version], but his characterization is unique to our market, so I have to pretty much rewrite lines wholesale. In Japanese, his sentences make a little more sense, but he adds "-rururururu" onto the end of everything. In English, he does things to sentence structure and grammar that simply should not be done.

What happened to Fawful's Bean 'n' Badge business from Partners in Time, and how did he rise back to the top of evilness?
Y'know, you'd have to ask Alpha Dream about it, but he did do a lot of muttering in Partners in Time about how he was going to bide his time, make a little cash, and fund his rise to power. I believe he said he was "waiting like an elevator."

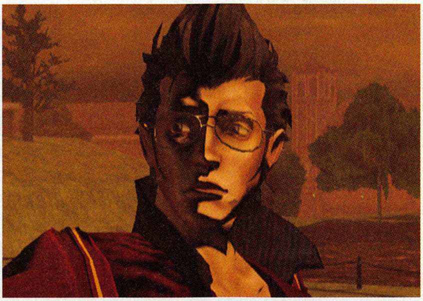
Fawful is, quite possibly, the most quotable video game character ever. Before we go, how about an early sample of one of his lines from Bowser's Inside Story?
"Beef? I am beefless. Fawful is lacking in beef."

THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL



Travis Touchdown's back with a vengeance in No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle for Wii.

CRUDE. VIOLENT. FUNNY. AWESOME. 2008's No More Heroes was one of the most refreshingly different games on the Wii console. A game that definitely earned its Mature rating, No More Heroes introduced the world to one of genius gamesmith Suda51's most endearing characters, Travis Touchdown. (In fact, he was the editors' choice as the best new character in the 2008 Nintendo Power Awards.) This beam katana-swinging otaku with a passion for professional wrestling and a weakness for beautiful women was putty in the hands of femme fatale Sylvia Christel, who used her charms to convince Travis to fight his way through the city of Santa Destroy to the top spot of the United Assassins Association (UAA).

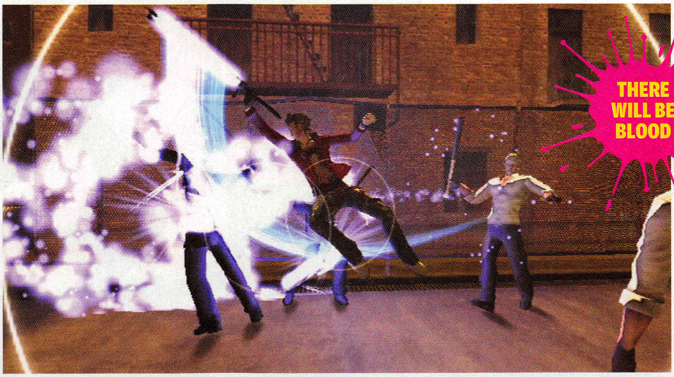


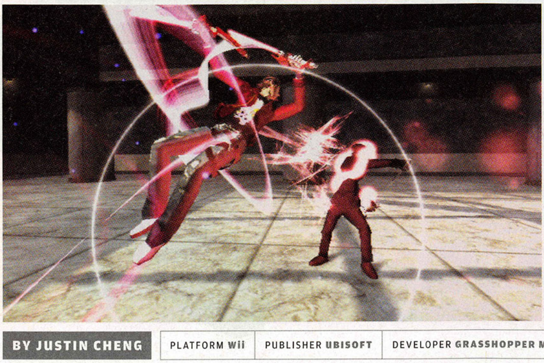
After Travis earned first place and discovered disturbing family secrets (if you haven't played the game, trust us—it got pretty crazy), fans were teased with the prospect of a sequel. Enter No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle. Three years after the events of the first game, Santa Destroy is booming. Corporations are investing money to enhance the metropolis, and tourists are flocking to it as a result. But Travis himself—despite garnering fame after becoming the top-ranked assassin in the first game—is still living in the same anime-decorated room at the No More Heroes motel. One day he receives a package and learns that his best friend, Bishop Shidux (the owner of the Beef Head video store who could always be relied upon to deliver Travis's motorcycle to him), is dead.

"In the first game, Travis's primary reason for fighting was to hook up with Sylvia. His motivation was kind of silly," explains Suda, the executive director of Desperate Struggle. "In No More Heroes 2, it's very personal. His friend was killed, and now Travis is out for revenge. He's taking this much more seriously." To reflect this new solemn outlook, Desperate Struggle eschews the cartoony graphics of the original title in favor of a look that's a tad more detailed yet still undeniably retains the familiar No More Heroes visual style. Travis, too, holds onto his individuality and overall Travisness. "Travis can't be Travis if he's not doing all kinds of stupid stuff, too. So don't worry; we're going to balance the seriousness of the fight this time with the silliness of Travis," says Suda. And though vengeance is his principal motivation for re-entering the UAA, Mr. Touchdown can't deny his true nature: "[Travis] still can't resist Sylvia's charm and gets tricked again!"

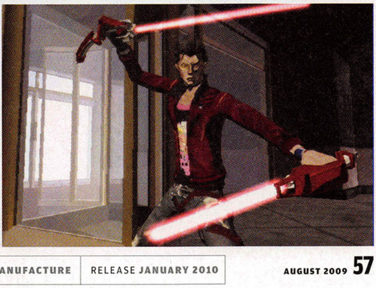
FIGHT TO WIN

To avenge his friend's death (and possibly get rewarded by Sylvia), Travis is prepared to take on every assassin that's standing in his way—and he'll pretty much have to. See, instead of starting at first

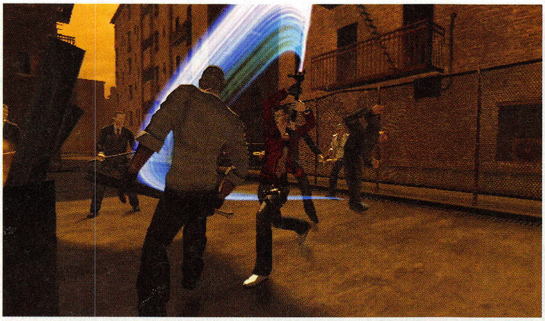


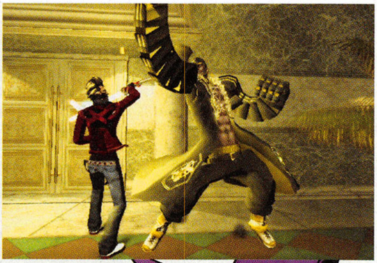


One thing you won't see in these screenshots of the Japanese version is blood. But mature gamers shouldn't fret—No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle will have lots of the red stuff.

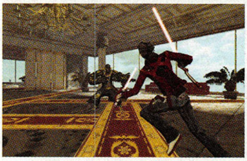


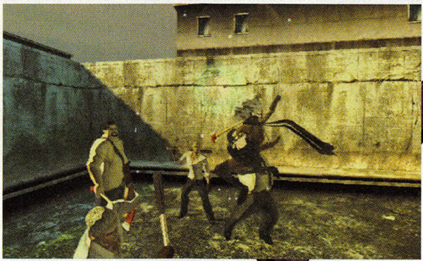
BY JUSTIN CHENG | PLATFORM Wii | PUBLISHER UBISOFT | DEVELOPER GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE | RELEASE JANUARY 2010

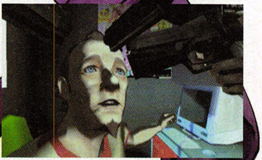




[Below left] Unlike Travis, Shinobu can jump. She's faster, too. [Below right] What do these guys have against Bishop?

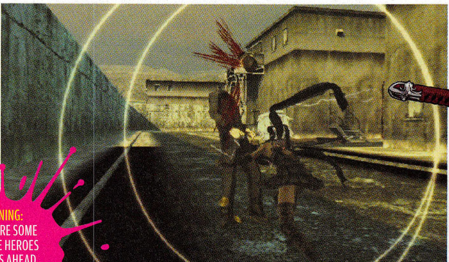


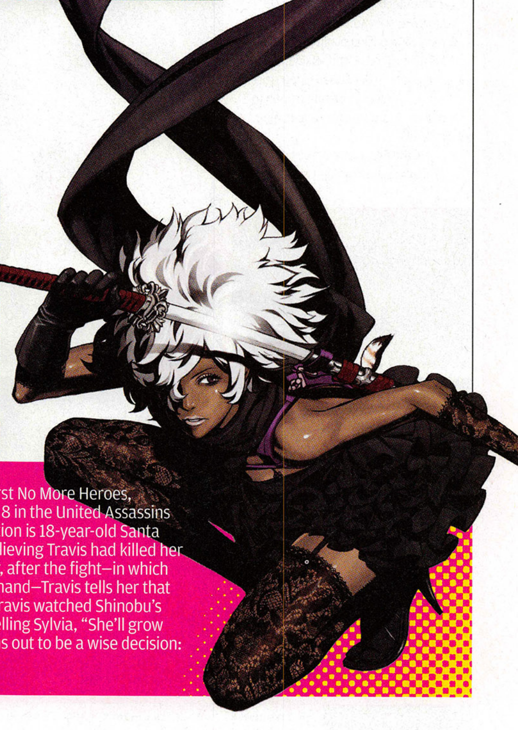




or 11th (his original rank in the first game) place, he now starts at 51st. (All thanks to Sylvia. See? We told you she's trouble.) And he won't just be fighting his way up the ladder; he'll be challenged by lower-ranked opponents, too. To make matters worse for him, some of the assassins will actually team up to take Travis down. Suffice it to say, Travis has a lot of people to eliminate.

Fortunately, he has some new skills in his arsenal, including the ability to wield two beam katanas at once ("It's a lot more satisfying than wielding just one beam katana") and new pro wrestling-style finishing maneuvers ("You

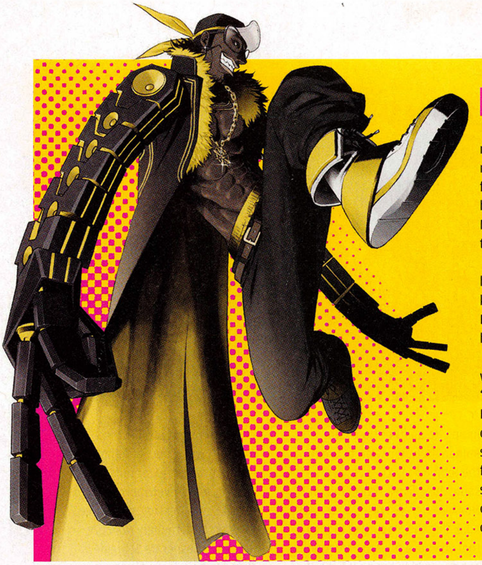




WARNING: THERE ARE SOME NO MORE HEROES SPOILERS AHEAD. PROCEED WITH CAUTION.

REVENGE OF SHINOBU

In the first No More Heroes, number 8 in the United Assassins Association is 18-year-old Santa Destroy High School student Shinobu (née Scarlet Jacobs). Believing Travis had killed her father, the katana-swinging Shinobu wants revenge. However, after the fight—in which Travis emerges as the victor after lopping off Shinobu's right hand—Travis tells her that he could never kill the man he considered to be his mentor. (Travis watched Shinobu's father's teachings on videotape.) He refuses to kill Shinobu, telling Sylvia, "She'll grow up. Why not kill her when she's stronger?" This ultimately turns out to be a wise decision: Shinobu winds up saving Travis's life at the end of the game.



LIKE A BOSS

Ranked 51st in the United Assassins Association, Travis has a long way to go before reaching first place. The first opponent he'll encounter is Nathan Copeland, a hip-hop-inspired character who's ranked number 50. "Nathan was a character that we originally created for the first game," elaborates Suda. "He was going to be the first boss that you fought, but he obviously didn't end up in that game, so we're bringing him back for No More Heroes 2. When I started working on this installment, I knew right away that I wanted to bring Nathan back."

One of the only other characters we know of is a harmless-looking schoolgirl who has a harmless-looking recorder—that just happens to be a double-bladed beam katana in disguise. "You know, Travis is a famous assassin now," Suda explains. "So I wanted to create a character who's a big, huge fan of his. She becomes an assassin herself, and she loves Travis so much that she wants to keep him just for her."

With 50 bosses to design, you might think the team at Grasshopper Manufacture would have some trouble staying creative. But that was not the case, Suda says. "When we started working on the game, I reunited the team from the first No More Heroes. So we had the character designer, Mr. [Yusuke] Kozaki, and the mechanics designer, Mr. [Shigeto] Koyama. We all got together and had a meeting to brainstorm ideas for new characters. Both Mr. Kozaki and Mr. Koyama really loved the first game, so they came back with a lot of ideas.... We were all on the same page, so [coming up with all of those characters] wasn't that difficult, actually. In terms of the fighting style for each boss, that sort of comes naturally after you design the character. It's very much informed by how they look."

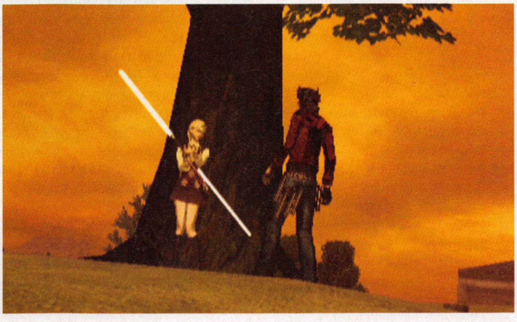
should see more backdrop techniques"). Speaking of the latter, use of the environment for certain moves is something the developers are hoping to add. (Just imagine what you could do in the new school, construction yard, prison, or stadium levels.)

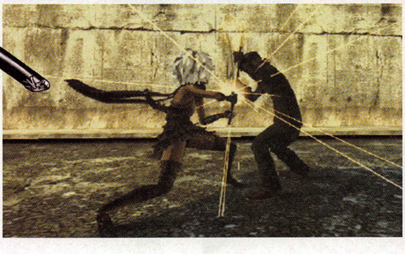
And Travis won't be fighting alone. "You'll be able to play as Shinobu, and her fighting style will be completely different from Travis's," reveals Suda. "She can jump, for example, and she's a lot faster than Travis." (For a refresher on Shinobu, see the "Revenge of Shinobu" sidebar.) There's a good reason for allowing you to play as this boss from the first game. "This time we have 50 boss battles, and we didn't just want you to be fighting them as the same character again and again. By allowing the player to use a different character, we can change up the tempo and offer more surprises." You can't play as Shinobu anytime you want, though; the game's story dictates when you switch characters. Also, with at least two playable characters (Suda laughs and says "we'll see" when asked if there are any more), it would make sense to have some sort of multiplayer mode. But while he would like to include that in the final game, Suda admits, "I don't think we're going to have time to implement anything on that front."

CITY OF VIOLENCE

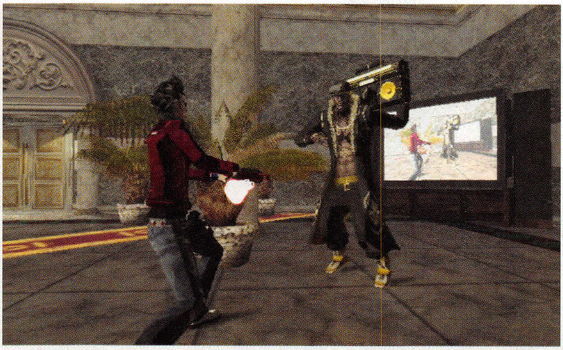
One element that has undergone significant changes is the city of Santa Destroy itself. A common complaint about No More Heroes was that you were presented with a large, open city to explore, but it felt rather lifeless. Suda proclaims,

[Right] Beware of schoolgirls bearing beam katanas.





オマエの命を探してた



[Right] Don't be fooled by Nathan Copeland's boom box. It transforms!

"Compared to [the first] No More Heroes, the city should be more compact and feel much denser. There will be a lot more stuff to do, and you'll be able to access more activities and minigames from the very beginning." These activities include more jobs and more side assassination missions that are now tied into the main story. And you can always interact with Travis's pet cat Jeane when you have some spare time, which is a minigame in itself. "In the previous game, Travis kept feeding her, so she got really fat," laughs Suda. "So in No More Heroes 2, one of the minigames has you trying to help her lose weight. We included that because we didn't want to lose against Ubisoft's Petz series!"

Additionally, there have been some tweaks to the game's structure in general. "This time, we want to mix it up a little bit more," Suda tells us. "So, for example, after you defeat a boss, you might jump into another boss fight immediately. We want to break up the tempo so it's not always the same thing like it was in the first No More Heroes. Also, we're really adjusting the amount of money that you have to earn before you can proceed to the next fight. We don't want it to be as much of a pain as it was in the first game."

With improvements like these—as well as the prospect of fighting an exponentially greater number of bosses—we're even more keen to revisit Santa Destroy. We'll have to be patient, though; No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle is slated to be released in January 2010.

THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN

We sat down with Suda51, the auteur behind No More Heroes, to discuss sequels, pro wrestling, and the greatness of Travis Touchdown.

NINTENDO POWER **This is your first time working on a sequel. What's that experience been like?**

SUDA51 After we finished No More Heroes, I really wanted to make a sequel. And outside of Japan—in North America and Europe—our sales were pretty good. So we checked in with Yasuhiro Wada, the president of Marvelous, and he agreed that the series really had potential. And we kept hearing from the users that they really loved Travis, so it seemed pretty natural to make a sequel.

But even though it's my first sequel, I'm not really approaching it differently than I would any other game. And it's not like we're just doing it to make more money or whatever. I want to continue the story of Travis. I have enough ideas to go to No More Heroes 5. [Laughs]

We imagine Travis must be a pretty fun character to write for. Is he your all-time favorite creation?

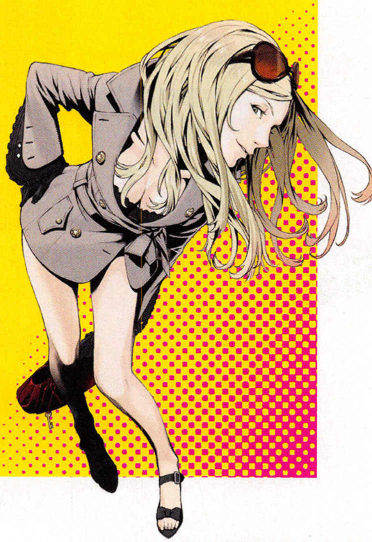
Yes. I like a lot of my other characters, too, but Travis is my favorite. He has a special place in my heart. He's a good friend of mine and I really wanted to work with him again. I will stay with him until he dies. I love him. And I want him to be a huge star, so that's why I'm working very hard to make this game as interesting as possible. Maybe in the future, we can see him fighting alongside Link in the next Smash Bros. [Laughs] That would be great.

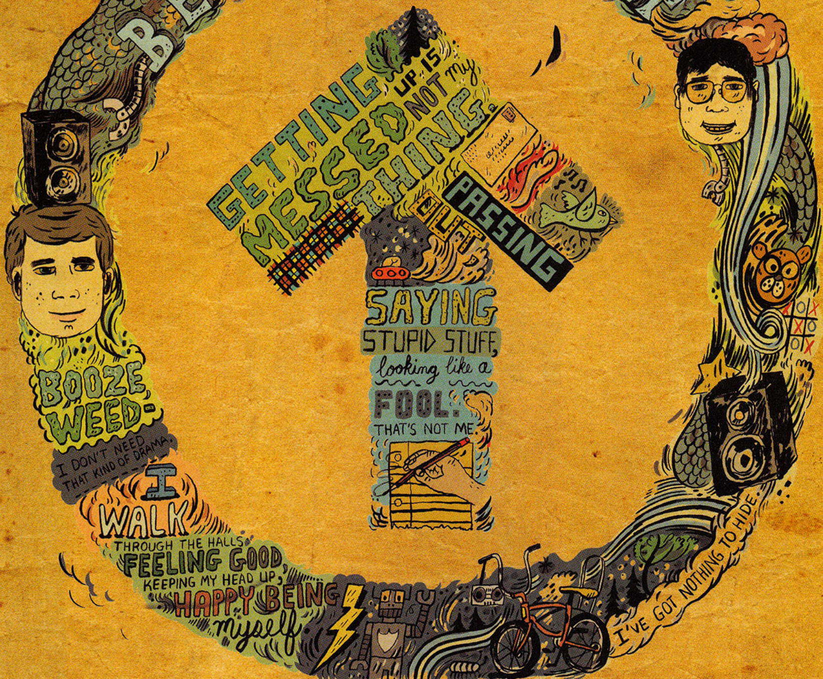
It's become something of a tradition that whenever we have the good fortune to chat with you we ask some sort of goofy hypothetical involving Travis. Last time, I think we asked you what would happen if Travis met Bruiser Brody. So this time, we wanted to ask what would happen if Travis quit the assassination business and decided to become a professional wrestler. Would he be a heel or a face, and what would be his gimmick?

If he were to become a pro wrestler, he would start as a heel. Everyone would boo him at first. But then there would be a situation where a bunch of heels are ganging up on a baby face. Travis comes out, and it would look like he was going to join them, but instead he turns on the heels and saves the baby face. So Travis would become an antihero. He's a heel with baby-face qualities. Oh, and his finishing move would be a low blow like Ric Flair's. [Laughs]

That is awesome. Thanks so much for your time. Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about No More Heroes 2?

All of your readers should really look forward to No More Heroes 2 because it's going to be not only one of the silliest games on Wii, but in the whole world. And you should expect more information in future issues of Nintendo Power! [Laughs]




BEING MYSELF
GETTING MESSED UP IS NOT MY THING.
PASSING OUT
SAYING STUPID STUFF, looking like a FOOL. THAT'S NOT ME.
BOOZE, WEED- I DON'T NEED THAT KIND OF DRAMA.
I WALK THROUGH THE HALLS FEELING GOOD, KEEPING MY HEAD UP, HAPPY BEING myself
I'VE GOT NOTHING TO HIDE.

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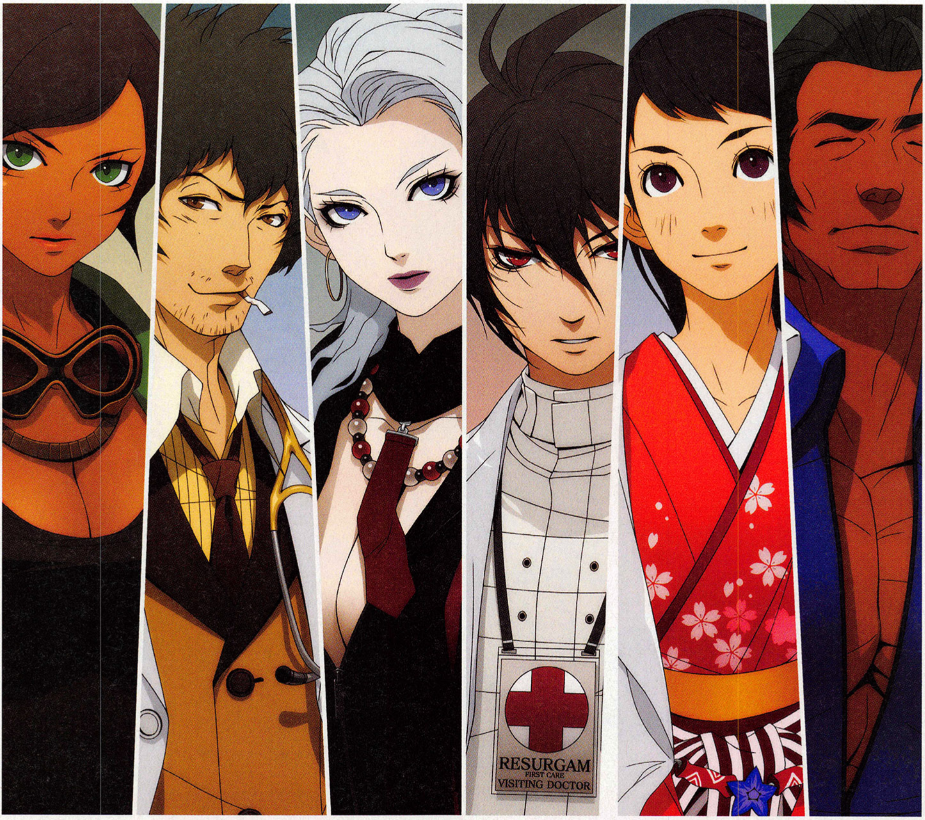
Six playable doctors.
Six medical specialties.
Atlus takes the Trauma Center formula to the next level with Trauma Team for Wii.

GROUP THERAPY


RESURGAM
FIRST CARE
VISITING DOCTOR

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

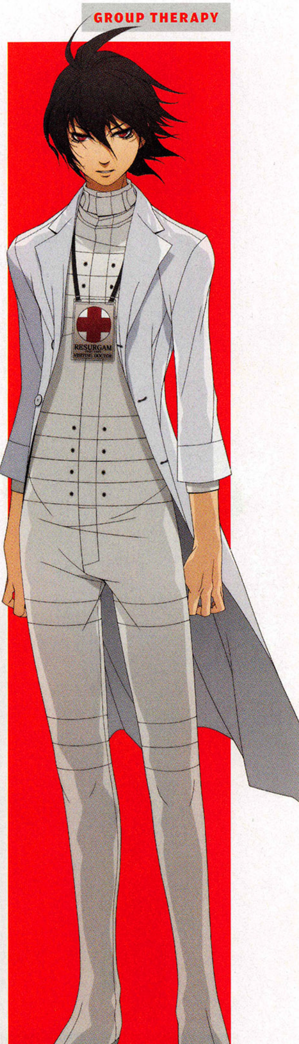
TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE, released for the Nintendo DS system in 2005, was a breakthrough title that offered intensely paced reflex-driven gameplay in a surgical setting. It also proved that while defeating bad guys is cool, saving patients' lives could be just as satisfying and challenging, if not more so. The sequels that followed—Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2 (for DS) and Trauma Center: Second Opinion and Trauma Center: New Blood (both for the Wii console), offered more of the same distinctive type of fun, but lacked the original's innovative spark; the operations and sci-fi-influenced stories usually seemed cut from the same cloth. But for the next installment, Atlus has gone back to the drawing board and returned with a vastly improved upgrade to the franchise: Trauma Team, which is coming exclusively to Wii in early 2010.

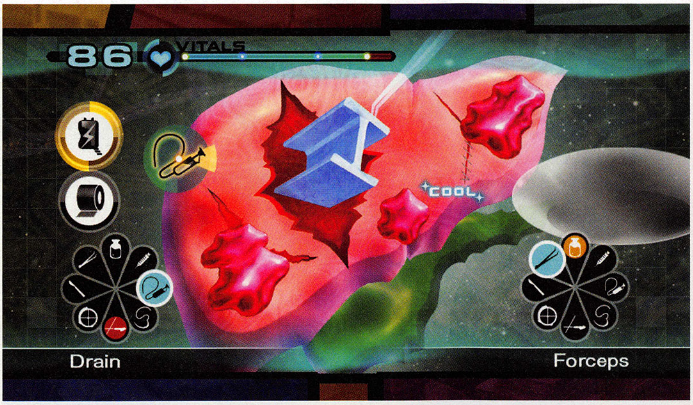
Topping the list of enhancements is the ability to play as six different doctors, each with a unique specialty, rather than controlling just a single surgeon or a duo as in past games.

"In considering what kind of game we wanted to make next, we first had to think about the kind of series that the Trauma Center games have become," says director Daisuke Kanada of Atlus Japan. "We came to realize that we'd only depicted a small segment of the medical world through all the games. Many people realize how fascinating the world of medicine is, and are impressed by the skills required of its practitioners, but we had only been presenting a single facet of that vast world in our surgery games. In the real world, there are many different schools of medicine, and while they all have the same objective—to save lives—the conditions for each are different, and so are the ways they treat their patients. When we considered incorporating those broader elements into the new game, we agreed that it ought to cover an entire hospital. Instead of following one or two doctors, we would have different doctors from a variety of disciplines. 'Trauma Center' was renamed 'Trauma Team' to emphasize the shift in focus from one doctor skilled at surgery to six doctors, each with their own specialty."

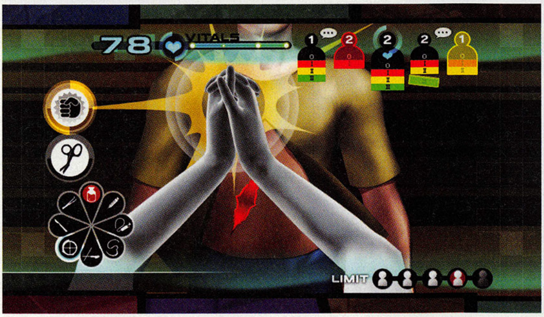
WHAT'S UP, DOC?

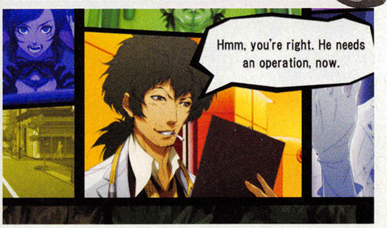
Set between Second Opinion and New Blood, Trauma Team offers six playable characters that hail from a variety of backgrounds and represent an array of disciplines. Gabriel is a diagnostician; Maria is an emergency medical technician;



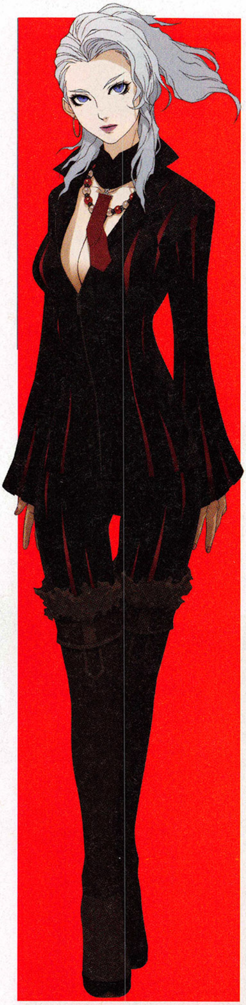


[Above] You don't have to be a doctor to know that that shouldn't be in there.




Hmm, you're right. He needs an operation, now.

PLATFORM **Wii** | PUBLISHER **ATLUS** | DEVELOPER **ATLUS** | RELEASE **SPRING 2010**



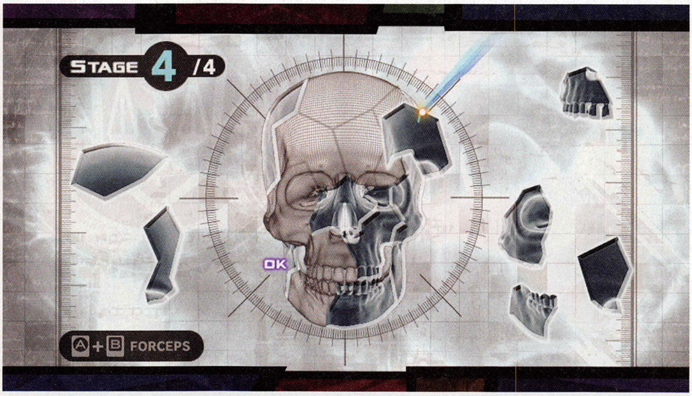
Tomoe is an endoscopic (minimally invasive) surgeon; and Hank is an orthopedic (muscle and skeletal) surgeon. Joining them are a highly skilled general surgeon who was recently released from prison to resume his practice (he goes only by his serial number, CR-S01), and forensics expert Naomi Kimishima (who was as a playable character in Second Opinion under the alias Nozomi Weaver).

"The six characters...play off each other, and their personalities complement one another well," explains Kanada. "The one thing they all have in common is that they're superb doctors who will do whatever it takes to save lives."

Each doctor has his or her own personal tale to play through, but the stories don't have a set order. You can play them in any sequence, and switch between characters (and stories) at essentially any point. Atlus representatives also promise that the different characters will add quite a bit of variety to the gameplay. Some doctors will use surgical implements—including a scalpel, forceps, a laser, sutures, syringes, ultrasound machines, and a drain—that should be familiar to players of past Trauma Center games, while others use new tools that haven't appeared in the Trauma Center series before (such as a stethoscope) or no tools at all. To add to the diversity, during some operations you'll be treating multiple patients simultaneously, while in others you'll be able to team up with a friend (locally, not online) for cooperative procedures.

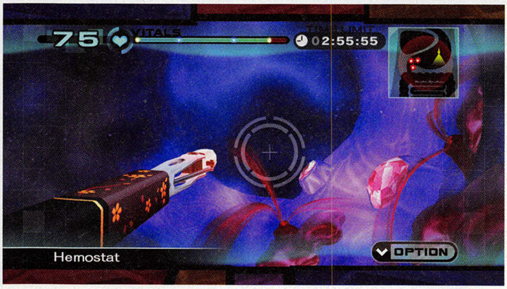
"The gameplay has enough variety that the different disciplines can be said to play out like entirely separate game genres. Some will have more action, and some will concentrate more on solving puzzles through clues, like an adventure game," Kanada comments. "Trauma Team isn't just about surgery; it uses the Wii Remote controller for a variety of procedures, from guiding an endoscope to listening to a stethoscope to checking details of an electrocardiogram, cutting clothing with scissors, securing a patient's respiratory tract, massaging hearts, drilling though bones and fixing joints, observing corpses for clues.... This medical game puts together the characteristics of several different medical genres into a single game. If you were to ask what kind of game this is, all we can say is, 'This is a game where you get to be a variety of doctors.'"

A new and diverse set of controls take advantage of the Wii console's capabilities and bring the varied procedures to life, although Atlus isn't revealing many specifics just yet. "The Wii Remote's usage will differ depending on the style of medicine," Kanada notes. "In this game, we'll utilize some features that we didn't before, like the accelerometer and speaker, and there will be more original control



[Above] Dr. Naomi Kimishima, the hospital's resident coroner, gets to engage in relaxing activities such as rebuilding shattered skulls.

I can save life... again...



methods.... We want the controls to be straightforward and easy for players to learn.... Wii offers more freedom in this respect than other platforms. Right now, this game could only be developed for Wii. If we were to make it for a different platform, we'd have to start back at the concept stage and probably take it in a different direction."

MEDICAL ADVANCEMENTS

One thing players shouldn't expect is crazy, creaturelike superviruses such as GUILT and STIGMA from the previous Trauma Center games. Trauma Team is putting more emphasis on realism, which means you'll instead be faced with a wider range of true-to-life ailments.

"Since multiple medical disciplines are represented, we were able to include a variety of real-life conditions and procedures that were not present in previous Trauma Center games," states Kanada. "There are far fewer fictional maladies than in the previous titles, and the doctors will not have any special abilities such as the Healing Touch. However, in terms of presentation, we did not want the game to be too realistic. Graphically, procedures are represented in a manner that allows players to clearly see what is happening without inducing queasiness."

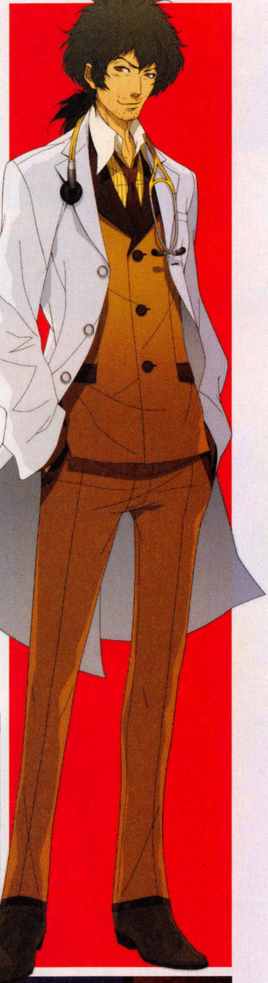
Though the visuals aren't getting a realistic makeover, the presentation is receiving a significant upgrade, with action-packed manga-style cut-scenes and full voiceovers that add more drama to the story.

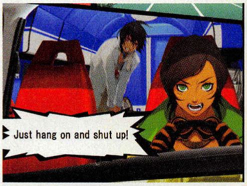
"In trying to make the game more entertaining than the previous Trauma Center games, we concluded that the story needed to be presented in a more dramatic fashion," reveals character designer Masayuki Doi. "Up until now, the games used static character portraits, but Trauma Team will use a more dynamic manner of storytelling. We sought to express the story in a new way that wasn't animation or a simple comic-book style, but shares some characteristics with each. Rest assured, this story of six fascinating characters will unfold in a completely original manner, very different from the past games."

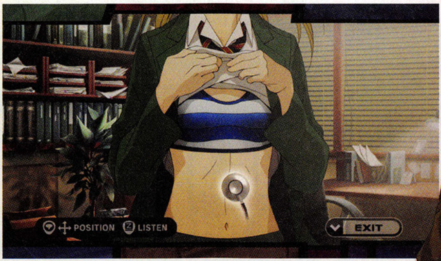
Another change to the Trauma Center formula involves the level of difficulty. Some of the past games in the series were staggeringly tough, even in Easy mode. The development team promises to make the game more accessible this time out, with challenge options suitable for all types of players.

"If any players have been avoiding the series because they've heard it's too difficult, I promise that it won't be a concern with this game. Trauma Team will be much more accessible to the average gamer, not just people who love extremely hard games," assures Kanada. "We've shifted our focus from an arcade-style surgical game to a more dramatic and accessible medical simulation, and in doing so we think the game can be enjoyed by many more people. That may well be the most important difference between Trauma Center and Trauma Team."

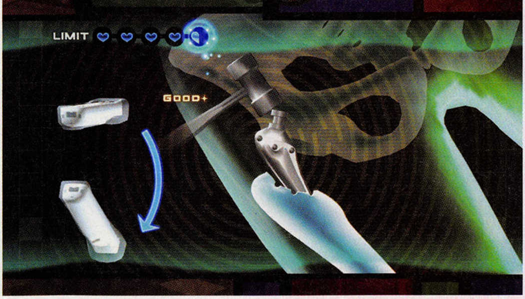
The game is fairly early in development, but Atlus appears to be making all the right choices to invigorate one of its best series. With more-varied gameplay, more-realistic operations, and a stronger emphasis on story layered on top of the tried-and-true medical action of Trauma Center, Trauma Team is all set to write a prescription for success.

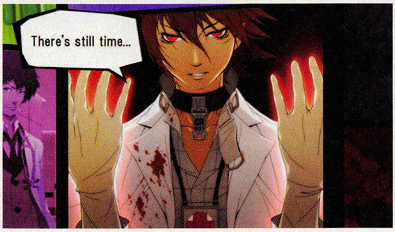


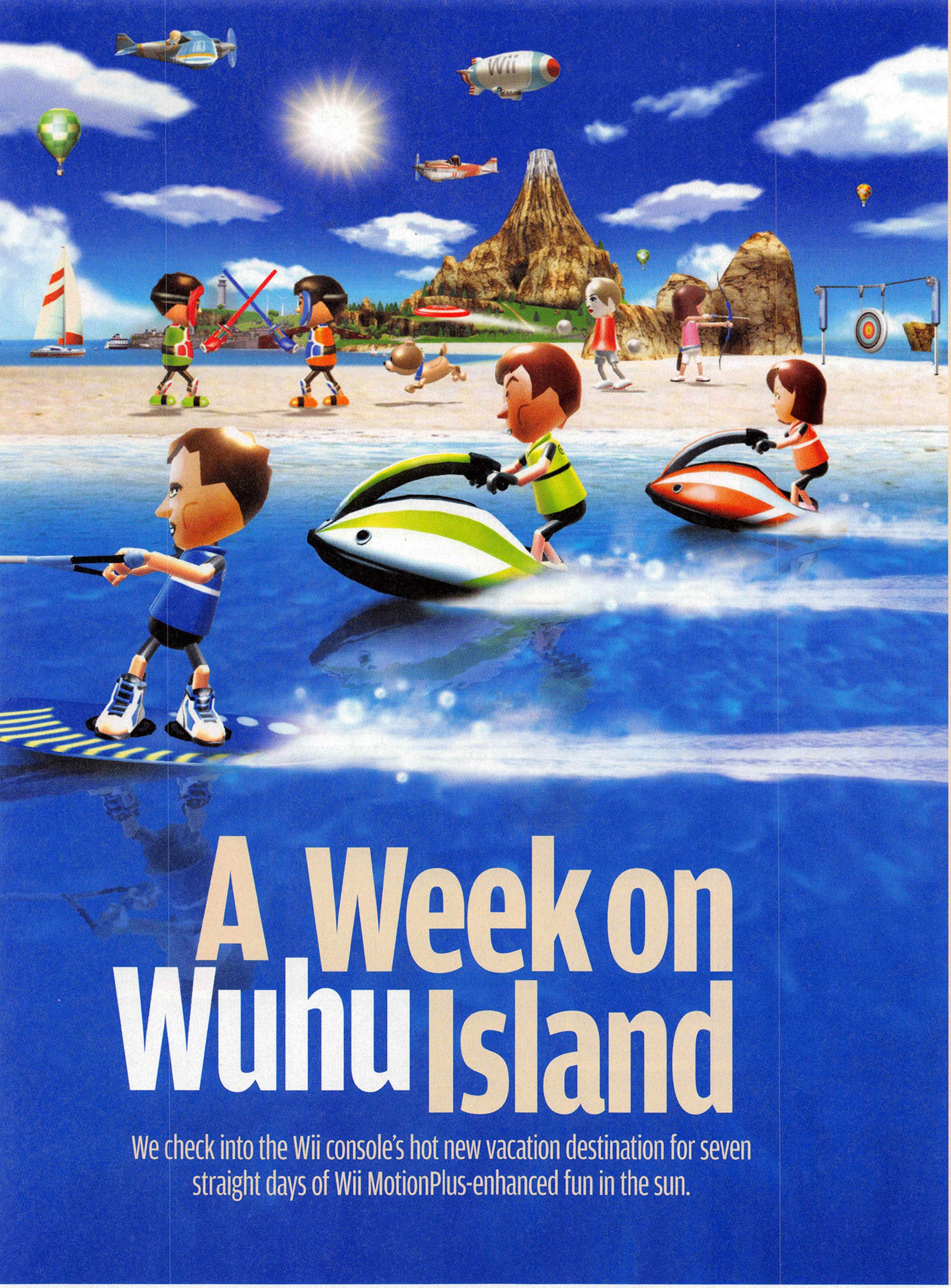

Just hang on and shut up!



[Right] Orthopedic surgery is apparently a lot like carpentry.
[Below] Supposedly, the doctors don't have any crazy powers like in Trauma Center, but CR-S01's hands sure are glowing funny....







A Week on Wuhu Island

We check into the Wii console's hot new vacation destination for seven straight days of Wii MotionPlus-enhanced fun in the sun.

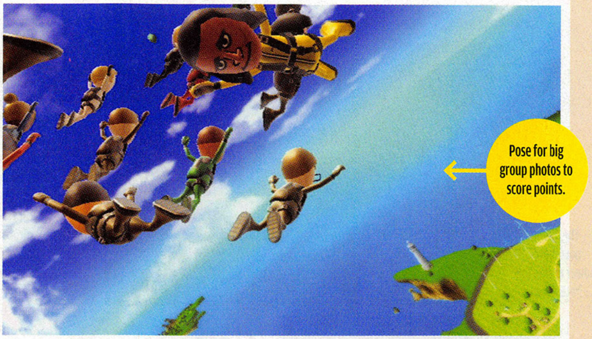
BY CHRIS SLATE

Our three-day getaway to Wii Sports Resort's Wuhu Island during E3 wasn't nearly enough, so we immediately booked a return trip. Since Resort is the game most likely to make the best use of the new Wii MotionPlus accessory (the two even come boxed together), we were determined to experience, explore, and analyze the title well beyond the quick and crowded demos available on the show floor. Our conclusion? The game far surpasses its history-making predecessor in every conceivable way and offers some of the greatest fun that both casual and hardcore gamers will have all year.

Yep, you read that right—core gamers should be very excited to play Wii Sports Resort. While the game is just as accessible to all audiences as the original, it has a lot more depth and includes challenges that only very skilled players have a chance of completing. These bonus tasks are called Stamps, and there are several unique to each game (for example, scoring over 200 in Bowling, and hitting a buzzer-beater in Basketball). In addition, most events offer Beginner, Intermediate, and Expert difficulty levels, and as in Wii Sports, victories level up your Mii in each of Resort's 24—count 'em, *24*—games. That's a lot of long-term goals to challenge even the hardest of the hardcore. And longtime Nintendo fans will appreciate that Wii Sports Resort includes what are essentially the next versions of Pilotwings and Wave Race, albeit simplified and under different names.

And let us be the first to officially welcome the Wii MotionPlus era. With the advanced controls afforded by the peripheral, swinging a sword, throwing a Frisbee, and flying a plane in Resort all feel just as magical as the first time we picked up a Wii Remote controller. Every event makes great use of the device's extra abilities; in fact, you can't play any of them without it. Some of the controls can be tricky to get the hang of at first, but in almost every case, we've been able to figure them out by simply moving as if we were actually playing the sport. The events aren't so realistic that you *have* to be skilled in their real-life counterparts to play, but you'll definitely catch on faster if, for example, you are already familiar with how to swing a paddle properly in Table Tennis. We can't think of any higher praise for what Nintendo has accomplished than to say that the controls are so spot-on that you can look to the real world for tips.

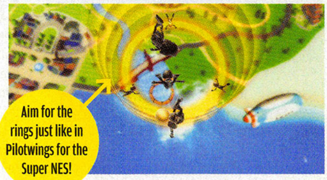
With revolutionary controls, a wider variety of games, deeper experiences, greater challenges, and many more events than the original Wii Sports (and with no total duds like Wii Sports Boxing), Wii Sports Resort is going to deliver big-time. We'll have our full review next issue, and—*spoiler alert!*—it's gonna be good. In the meantime, we've laid out our opinions of every sport in the game; our conclusions are based on many long play sessions. Enjoy your stay on Wuhu Island, and we'll see you back on the mainland!



Pose for big group photos to score points.

Air Sports

SKYDIVING (1 PLAYER) • ISLAND FLYOVER (1 PLAYER) DOGFIGHT (2 PLAYERS)



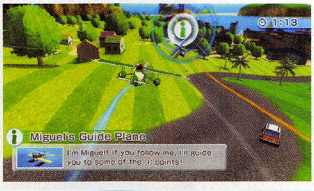
Aim for the rings just like in Pilotwings for the Super NES!

When you first turn on Wii Sports Resort, you're introduced to the game through Skydiving. The event not only makes for a fun way to reach Wuhu Island, but it also serves as a quick tutorial for how to use a Wii MotionPlus-enhanced Wii Remote. Moving your free-faller works like a dream: you simply dip the tip of the remote to tilt your Mii into a faster head-first dive, level the remote to flatten out and slow his descent, and twist it left or right to lean and move him in the chosen direction. Skydiving plays a lot like it did in Nintendo's classic Super NES and N64 Pilotwings titles, only without a comparatively clumsy Control Pad or Control Stick coming between you and your Mii.

After you've had a little time to get the hang of the controls (and really, it only takes a few seconds), many other skydivers join you. If you angle your Mii toward one of them, the two will automatically grab hold of each other when they come into contact. It's possible to link many Miis this way, and in the full version of Skydiving (which becomes available once the introductory lesson is over), photos are taken of your pairings, and are scored once the event ends. All in all, Skydiving isn't one of the deepest games included in Wii Sports Resort, but it's easily one of the most charming and is a great showcase for Wii MotionPlus.

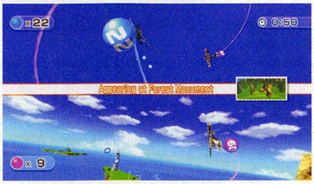
The Air Sports category also includes Island Flyover, which is an NP-staff favorite. To fly, you simply handle the Wii Remote as if it were a toy airplane, and the onscreen plane matches your movements. The connection is amazing, like you're reaching into the TV and manipulating the plane with your hand. You can explore the entire island from the air, flying over, under, or through the areas that are featured in the other events—you can even visit the small island where the golf course is located. You're given five minutes to explore and try stunts ("Can I fly into that cave if I turn sideways?"), and if you're up for it, you can seek out the island's many Information Points to learn about the various areas. After your flight, any newly found Information Points are added to your log (gotta collect 'em all!).

Finally, there's a split-screen Vs. mode in which you dogfight with one other player (the A Button fires the guns). Although the action isn't as fast or intense as in other air-combat titles, it's still a lot of fun to shoot, loop, and barrel-roll in the skies above the island.

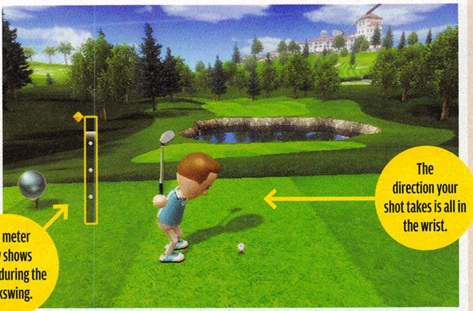


Miguel's Guide Plane

I'm Miguel! If you follow me, I'll guide you to some of the (i) points!

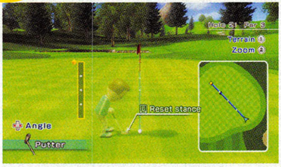


PLATFORM **Wii** | PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER **NINTENDO** | RELEASE **JULY 2009**



The meter now shows power during the backswing.

The direction your shot takes is all in the wrist.



Golf

(1-4 PLAYERS)

Golf is vastly improved over its original Wii Sports iteration. Thanks to the Wii MotionPlus accessory's ability to know exactly how it is being held and moved, swinging a club is much more natural and intuitive. The difference between a hook, a slice, and perfection rests solely in delivering an even swing.

A smaller but still incredibly helpful change has been made to the swing meter. Now when you pull your swing back, the meter displays exactly how much power your swing will have. Thanks to this simple addition, you'll need to spend a lot less time taking practice swings before every stroke.

Finally, you can choose to play on a brand-new Resort course or revisit the original Wii Sports greens for 3-, 9-, or 18-hole games. We enjoyed playing golf in the last game well enough, but with all of the upgrades, Wii Sports Resort Golf has become a true standout.

Bowling

STANDARD GAME (1-4 PLAYERS) • 100-PIN GAME (1-4 PLAYERS) • SPIN CONTROL (1-4 PLAYERS)

In our opinion, Bowling was the best game in the original Wii Sports, so we're thrilled to see it return with a new island flavor (Hawaiian shirts for everyone!). The standard game remains largely unchanged, but uses Wii MotionPlus to more accurately put spin on the ball. In Wii Sports, you could get a lot of strikes simply by moving your Mii to the far side of the lane and swinging forward with the Wii Remote held sideways. But in Resort this isn't enough; you have to twist the remote as you release the ball to put proper spin on your throw. The degree to which you twist will result in a corresponding amount of spin, meaning that—as in real life—you have to develop a good technique for throwing. With this new method, it's hard to imagine anyone circumventing skill to find a quick and easy way to score strikes.

You can work on your throws in the returning Spin Control mode (our favorite way to bowl), where you are challenged to curve the ball around in-lane obstacles. The 100-Pin game is also back, only this time you're throwing at a full set of 100 pins in every frame instead of their numbers growing as you go along.

The advanced spin control is nice, but overall, Bowling doesn't add significantly to what came before. It was fantastic to begin with, though, so you won't hear us complaining.

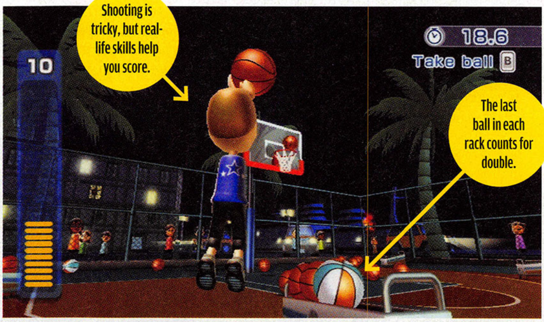
7 8 9 10
4 5 6
2 3
1
1 2 3
Zoom
Position
Ⓐ Switch

Basketball

3-POINT CONTEST (1-4 PLAYERS) • PICKUP GAME (1 OR 2 PLAYERS)

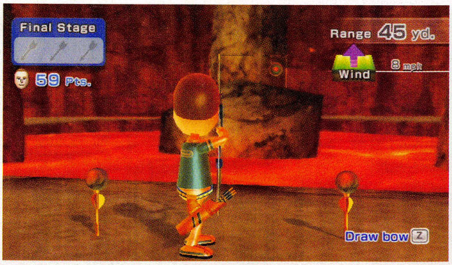
As all of us here at NP discovered when we first took a turn playing 3-Point Contest, shooting a basketball can be one of the trickiest actions to master in Wii Sports Resort. To the game's credit, however, we started to sink shots when we adopted the same shooting motion we would use on a real court: keep the remote held level, use proper form, release the B Button just as your hand swings forward, and follow through on your shot. As with the real thing, you'll *feel* a perfect shot before the ball goes through the net. It's tough to maintain proper form while hurrying to beat the clock, and it's hard to keep your focus all the way through to the last ball rack—just as it should be.

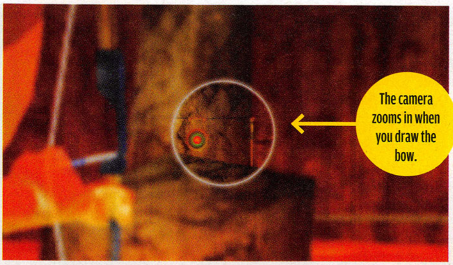
We are even more impressed with Pickup Game, which is a three-on-three game of basketball. While your control over the on-court action is limited to just passing, shooting, stealing, and blocking (player movement is automatic, although you can dribble with the Wii Remote to move closer to the basket), the action still feels enough like basketball to give hoops fans a good time. Basic basketball strategies, such as working the ball around to get a player open, pump-faking to create an open shot, and weighing a steal attempt against staying in good defensive position are all here. And if the lane is open, you can even dribble in and tomahawk the Wii Remote to dunk! All of this makes for perhaps the best trash-talking two-player game Wii Sports Resort has to offer.



Shooting is tricky, but real-life skills help you score.

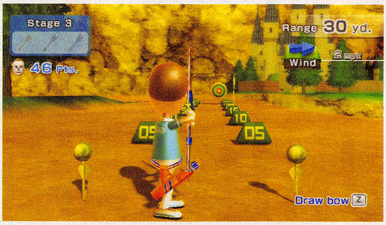
The last ball in each rack counts for double.




The camera zooms in when you draw the bow.

Archery

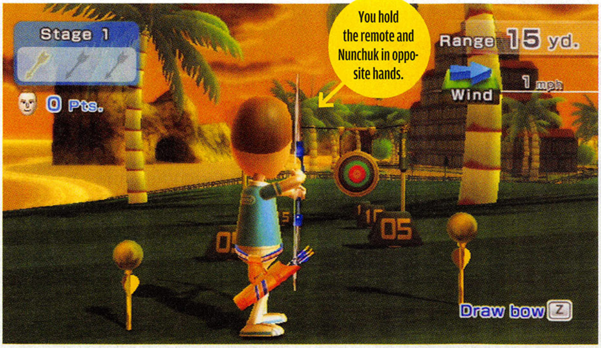
(1-4 PLAYERS)

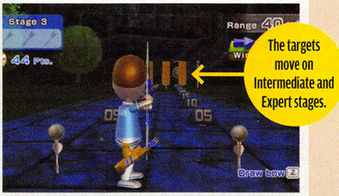


We suspect that, for many players, Archery will become Resort's signature game. The event does one of the best jobs at mimicking the real thing, and every time we let an arrow fly it's impossible not to imagine it thudding into an Octorok (c'mon Nintendo, get that new Wii Zelda ready!).

This event requires the Nunchuk controller, and you have to hold it and the Wii Remote in the opposite hands that you normally would (for example, if you are right-handed, you hold the remote in your left hand and the Nunchuk in your right). The remote acts as the bow's grip, so you hold it vertically in your outstretched hand. Pressing and holding the Z Button on the Nunchuk nocks an arrow, and you pull the Nunchuk back to draw the string (which is accompanied by a satisfyingly realistic tightening sound). The camera then zooms in to give you a kind of scope view, which you aim by moving the remote/bow. After compensating for wind and distance, you release Z to shoot. As far as we're concerned, this is the only way to do archery in games from now on.

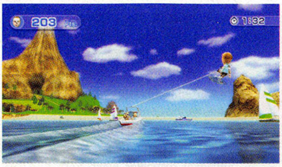
Three separate difficulty levels offer totally different sets of targets. By the time you reach the Expert level, you're shooting around obstacles at moving targets in extreme environments like the inside of the island's volcano—yeah, it's as tough and cool as it sounds.


You hold the remote and Nunchuk in opposite hands.


The targets move on Intermediate and Expert stages.

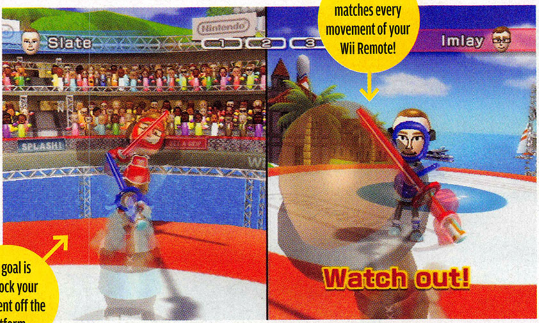
Wakeboarding

(1-4 PLAYERS)



While it provides a fun diversion, Wakeboarding isn't one of our favorites because there isn't much to it, and although the controls work fine, they aren't as jaw-droppingly cool as in many other events. Holding the Wii Remote horizontally and gripping both sides like the onscreen wakeboarder's handle, you tilt the controller to swing left and right across the water while the boat pulls you along. Zipping across the boat's wake at a good speed will launch you into the air, especially if you pull up on the remote as you leave the water. The tricky part is landing. After your Mii automatically performs a trick (the higher he goes, the flashier the trick), you've got to quickly adjust the remote to level out his board so that it hits the water flat. With each successfully completed jump the boat goes faster, causing you to fly higher and score more points, and the landings become more difficult. When you mess up, the boat slows to its original speed and you have to start building up your jumps again.

Getting better provides a good challenge, and there are three difficulty levels to tackle, but because there's not a compelling multiplayer component (players simply take turns), there are much better ways to spend your time on the island.



The sword matches every movement of your Wii Remote!

The goal is to knock your opponent off the platform.

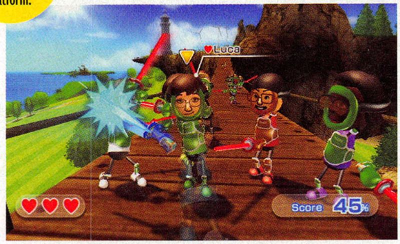
Swordplay

DUEL (1 OR 2 PLAYERS) • SPEED SLICE (1 OR 2 PLAYERS) • SHOWDOWN (1 PLAYER)

Gamers have been clamoring for true 1:1 sword control since the Wii console was first announced, and Wii Sports Resort's Swordplay events will finally give it to them. It's hard to imagine that any game could offer more satisfying sword controls than this one. Since the onscreen sword perfectly matches every subtle movement of your Wii Remote, dueling is a simple matter of finding the opening in your opponent's defense and swinging at the appropriate angle. Holding the B Button allows you to maneuver your sword to block; for example, you would hold the remote horizontally to counter a high vertical strike. A blocked attack causes the aggressor to lose his balance momentarily, which gives the defender an opportunity for an easy hit if he's fast enough. With just these few straightforward elements, dueling becomes a mind game—especially between two human players—where the key is to do the unexpected and psych out your opponent.

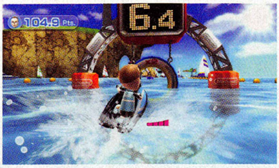
The same excellent sword control is also used in Speed Slice, a quick-fix minigame where the point is to cut through objects the moment they appear by swinging your remote in the direction indicated on the screen. The one-note action here is only so-so, but improves when competing with another player (ideally among a group of onlookers cheering each winning slice).

Much more interesting is an event called Showdown, in which you battle large groups of opponents, and eventually a boss Mii, as your character autowalks to his destination. Beating a stage unlocks the next one—there are 10 in all—and your adversaries become more skilled and tougher to beat as you progress.



Power Cruising

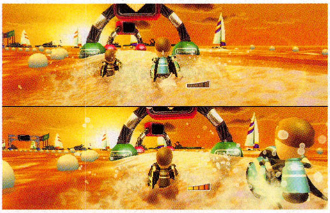
SLALOM COURSE (1-4 PLAYERS) • VS. (2 PLAYERS)



Power Cruising is essentially a Wii edition of the Wave Race series (minus the tricks), which was last seen on GameCube. From the floating slalom gates to the large rolling waves to the lighting of the various times of day, this event bears a remarkable resemblance to the popular water-racing franchise. There are even six different courses to master, making this event more of a full game than a quick diversion.

To steer your watercraft, you hold the Wii Remote and Nunchuk horizontally, angled toward each other like handlebars. B is gas, and "revving" the remote by twisting it back triggers a charged-up speed boost. The controls are easy to learn, they work well, and they do a good job representing the real thing, but you really have to keep the controllers positioned properly and move them in unison to avoid problems. It works best to hold them out at arm's length, but this becomes tiring. So, although the event is a lot of fun, it's not quite as effortlessly enjoyable as most of the others.

The split-screen Vs. race is interesting in that, while the gates must be passed through in the correct order to proceed, each requires only that *one* competitor clear it. This adds a fun competitive wrinkle, as one racer can skip a gate to go through the next one as long as his opponent passes through the correct gate first. This results in fun mind games, and dual respawns when both players skip a gate. This extra bit of strategy makes an already fun multiplayer experience that much more compelling.



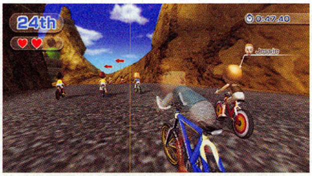
Cycling

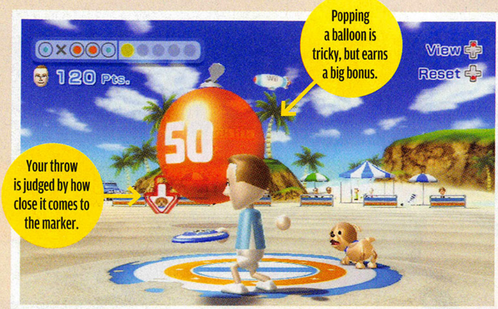
ROAD RACE (1 OR 2 PLAYERS) • VS. (2 PLAYERS)

Until we read the in-game tutorial, we had no clue how the controls would work for a sport in which the primary action is pedaling with your feet. The solution doesn't feel as true-to-life as the controls in many other categories, but we were surprised by how fun Cycling is.

You pedal by alternately shaking the Wii Remote and Nunchuk, and you steer by twisting them simultaneously left or right. Thankfully, you don't have to worry about tiring out your arms since light shakes will do, and you often have to coast to keep your rider's stamina up. If he does get winded, you can draft behind a competitor to regain some strength. Pedaling quickly will trigger a burst of speed, but you can do this only sparingly since it quickly wears down your Mii.

Six courses offer varied scenery and challenges, such as steep inclines and areas of high winds that can push you off course.





Popping a balloon is tricky, but earns a big bonus.

Your throw is judged by how close it comes to the marker.

Frisbee

FRISBEE DOG (1-4P) • FRISBEE GOLF (1-4P)

Jumping catch!

Playing with a Frisbee is about the most relaxing thing you can do in Wii Sports Resort. There's no rush, no time limit—in Frisbee Dog it's just you, a cute dog, and a gorgeous beach. Throwing the disc is one of the most authentic-feeling actions in the game, and it's dead-easy to do. Well, it's easy just to throw, but throwing the Frisbee *precisely* at the marker takes a good bit of skill. Just as it should, the disc will fly higher and lower and curve depending on the angle at which you hold the Wii Remote when you release it (by letting go of the B Button). Getting better at Frisbee requires building a skill rather than learning any particular tricks; you just have to develop a feel for how to hold, swing, and release the disc. You're scored on how close your toss is to the marker when your dog snags it, and you can earn bonus points by popping large balloons that sometimes appear. This is the ultimate "Just one more turn!" event.

Frisbee Golf is also ridiculously fun, and plays exactly how you would imagine. It uses three different discs, each of which has a different range, and your goal is to toss one of them through a column of light that stands where a hole would normally be. The challenge lies in angling your throws around a green's curves while avoiding trees, which is the ultimate way to test your Frisbee skills.

Wind
6 mph
View
Direction
Change Frisbee

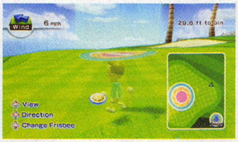
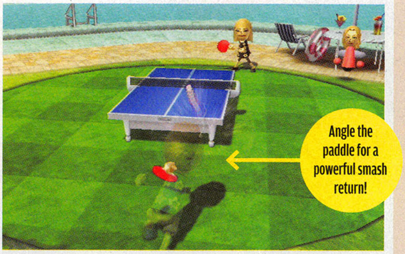


Table Tennis

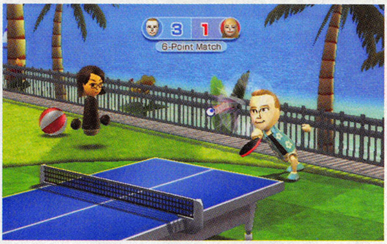
MATCH (1 OR 2 PLAYERS) • RETURN CHALLENGE (1-4 PLAYERS)

Replacing Tennis from Wii Sports, Table Tennis shows how much better racket/paddle control is with Wii MotionPlus. Every little twist and turn of your wrist is reflected onscreen, allowing you to put spin on the ball just as you would in the real world. The difference is amazing, and now that we've gotten a good feel for how this new control style works, it's hard to imagine ever going back.

In Match mode the first player to reach six points wins a match, but the action often goes on much longer since you must win by two. In Return Challenge balls are continually served at you and you must hit them back. The goal is to return as many as you can; a single miss ends the game. Your paddle control is put to the test as serves come at you from all angles, and you earn bonus points by hitting cans that appear on the table. This mode didn't impress us at first—we were much more interested in regular split-screen Match play—but now we're hooked.



Angle the paddle for a powerful smash return!



Canoeing

SPEED CHALLENGE (1-4 PLAYERS) • VS. (2-4 PLAYERS)

84.04 yd.
29.0
9/10
10/10

A canoe is one of the most challenging things to steer in Wii Sports Resort, but no more so than its real-life counterpart. Rowing works well—you just hold the Wii Remote vertically in both hands like it's the handle of a paddle, and stroke it downward to your left or right. Rowing repeatedly on just one side will turn you in circles, whereas alternating sides evenly will propel you forward in a fairly straight line. The tricky part is that you can't change direction on a dime since your momentum will continue to carry you in the previous direction; keeping a good racing line requires you to plan your turns so that you can work into them gradually. That's easier said than done, however, while avoiding obstacles and racing against the clock or other people.

This event is at its best when you're sharing a single canoe with up to three of your friends—the more the merrier. Everyone has to coordinate their paddling to get around the course, which results in a lot of yelling and laughing. I wouldn't put Canoeing at the top of my list of favorite events, but it's fun to play when friends are available.

A Star is (Re)Born

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN AND CHRIS SLATE

Who is Starfy?

How was he created?

Why did it take him seven years to reach our shores?

We chat with series producer Hitoshi Yamagami to get the inside story on Nintendo's newest star.

DURING HIS 20 YEARS at Nintendo, Hitoshi Yamagami has contributed to a long list of storied franchises. His gameography includes versions of Fire Emblem, Pokémon, F-Zero, Wario, and Tetris. But after our chat with the veteran producer, it's clear that there's a special place in his heart for his collaboration with developer TOSE on a series that stars a gutsy undersea hero called Starfy. With the recent release of The Legendary Starfy for the Nintendo DS system, the titular hero has finally made a splash in North America. But in Japan, Starfy has been in action for the past seven years, starting with his original 2002 adventure for Game Boy Advance. Since we like to consider ourselves experts on all things Nintendo, we asked Yamagami to bring us up to speed on this "missing" long-running Nintendo franchise.

NINTENDO POWER What was the origin of the Starfy series? What was the original design philosophy of the game?

HITOSHI YAMAGAMI In 1996, my boss at the time came up with the concept of a game with a floaty feel, and we created a game in which you lifted a balloon to guide it along. But we couldn't get the balloon to move the way we had hoped and it just turned out to be an annoying game that wasn't any fun at all. So I told my boss I wanted to operate the balloon itself directly and I got his approval for the idea. And that's how we decided to create an action game about a main character that moves in a floaty, buoyant manner.

I later met with Mr. [Yasuhiro] Minamimoto from TOSE, the development company, to talk the concept over. In the course of discussing it with him, it occurred to me: "If the character is going to be buoyant, then wouldn't it be more natural for the action to take place underwater?" So we came up with the idea of changing the balloon into a bubble with a Nintendo character inside of it. But having a Nintendo character enclosed within a bubble wasn't a very practical setup, so we talked about making the bubble itself into a character. Someone said that we should have the kind of marine protagonist that hasn't really been seen before, such as a jellyfish or a starfish. [The Japanese word for starfish is *hitode*, which literally means "human hand," presumably because a starfish's five appendages look like a hand with its fingers splayed out.] Someone else said that, since *hitode* is *starfish* in English, we should call him Starfy. So, the character was created using the motif of a starfish, and the gameplay was determined by that character's movement. The development began for Game Boy and went through versions designed for Game Boy Color and Game Boy Advance. The first Starfy game was finally released in 2002 after six years of development.

"I wanted to sell the Starfy series [here] from the start, but we just couldn't make it fit in with the North American cultural climate."

What do you think makes Starfy stand out as a hero? How is he different from other Nintendo characters?

Starfy has a small body, but he's awfully strong, and he can use his signature Spin Attacks to bash the stuffing out of his enemies! But strength is just one of the conditions for becoming the king of Pufftop. You also need a sense of justice and courage, and Starfy has been brought up by his father, PapaStar, to be a prince that people will call a hero!

Even if you search the roster of other Nintendo characters, you are not likely to find any other platforming marine creatures that can measure up to Starfy. He is also one of the most expressive Nintendo characters. I think you could say he is a character that clearly shows his joy, anger, sorrow, and amusement in his facial expressions.

Why did previous Starfy games not come to North America?

Until the last release, the details that appeared in the stories and games were geared too much toward Japanese players. We didn't think they'd resonate with audiences overseas, so they weren't released there. I wanted to sell the Starfy series in North America from the start, but we just couldn't make it fit in with the North American cultural climate. With The Legendary Starfy [subtitled Confrontation: Dire Pirate Squad in Japan], we were conscious of overseas sales from the planning stage, so I think that was what clinched the decision to release it overseas as well.

Why is now the right time for Starfy to make his arrival?

Starfy made his way to North America by swimming across the ocean, so it took him seven whole years. No, I'm only kidding, but Starfy has grown through the series to become truly heroic, so we felt certain that Americans would also like to watch him in action. And that's

PLATFORM **NINTENDO DS** | PUBLISHER **NINTENDO** | DEVELOPER **TOSE** | RELEASE **OUT NOW** how we decided the time was right to sell the game here.

What can you tell us about the characters and their relationships from their previous adventures that might make things more interesting for North American players?
There are all sorts of things, but when it comes to romances between Starfy characters...let's see.... There's Moe, who has a secret crush on Ruby but can never bring himself to come out and say it, so it just stays one-sided. Konk, who appears in Stage 9, also has a thing for Ruby, so it's a kind of triangular relationship. Oh, and Starfy and Starly both had people they fell in love with in the previous adventures, but they ended up broken-hearted.

How has the series evolved from its inception?
It took six years of development before the first Starfy game was released, but because it was extremely well received, the decision to make Starfy 2 was made right away. It also sold very well, so we moved on to a third game, and so on. Before we knew it, a whole series was built.

North American players first encountered Starfy in Super Smash Bros. Brawl. How were his appearance and actions in that game representative of the character? Did his debut there lead to The Legendary Starfy coming to North America?
At the time that Super Smash Bros. Brawl was being created, the latest Starfy game had not gone on sale yet, so the character's appearance and actions that you see in the North American version of Brawl were based only on the first four Starfy games sold in Japan.

As you seem to have guessed, we were conscious of the overseas market while developing the Starfy content for inclusion in Brawl, so we kept Starfy's overall appeal in mind when choosing his forms of expression. The actions that are used in Smash Bros. can all be used in the Starfy game as well. And I think gamers will be happy to find that the new Starfy represents a power-up over the one that appears in Smash Bros.

Starfy reminds us of Kirby is several ways. How do you think those two characters would get along if they met one another?
Starfy and Kirby are both very friendly, so don't you think they would become friends right away? Kirby is very active in the sky, in the same way that Starfy is active in the sea.

What does the game do really well that other games don't?
Starfy's number-one selling point is the exhilarating feeling of freely moving around the screen in a way that feels like gliding through the ocean. You don't see this kind of lateral-scrolling action with free up-and-down movement in many other games. There are a lot of eye-catching scenes that we would like the players to enjoy. The choreography of the cartoon characters is clever and the action gimmicks are thrilling. And then there's the endless, flowing movement of floating across the screen or bobbing up and down.

> "Starfy's number-one selling point is the exhilarating feeling of freely moving around the screen in a way that feels like gliding through the ocean."

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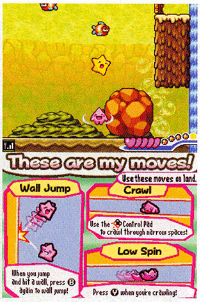

These are my moves!

Use these moves on land.

Wall Jump

When you jump and hit a wall, press B again to wall jump!

Crawl

Use the Control Pad to crawl through narrow spaces!

Low Spin

Press Y when you're crawling!

With a cute character and fun platforming, The Legendary Starfy will hopefully be the first of many new Starfy titles.

First-time players often think Starfy is a starfish, but he's not. Why did you choose to give him characteristics of a starfish (the shape and swimming ability) but make him a different kind of creature?
Well, since we call him "Legendary," we couldn't just make him an ordinary starfish. He had to be someone more amazing than that. Although the motif is a starfish, he is a kind of mysterious creature that is somewhere between a starfish and a real celestial star.

What does TOSE's experience bring to this series? What is the creative collaborative process like between TOSE and Nintendo?
I have worked with TOSE for many years. The entire Starfy series is produced by TOSE, and Super Princess Peach, which sold over one million copies in North America, is produced by the same development team as Starfy. You could say that this team's abundant experience in producing 2-D action games has crystallized in the Legendary Starfy series.

Now that Starfy is here, should American audiences expect to see more of him? Do you think we might see him come to Wii?
It all depends on the reaction of the North American audience, but...I'm more interested in creating a new game than in remaking 1 through 4 for North America. And if demand for a Wii version is strong, then we'll see!

In the bonus ninth chapter, there are brief stories about Starfy's previous adventures. Are there any other fun tidbits like this that players should keep their eyes open for?
In the Today's Guest corner of Moe's Briefcase, the players can have conversations with various different characters. You will get to see interactions between characters here that don't ordinarily come to the foreground, so please be sure to read this part! Also, you can enjoy a different conversation by playing the same stage again after you've cleared it, so please use this to get a [broader] feel for Starfy's world!

How do you personally feel about Starfy coming to North America, and what would you like to say to players here who have been patiently waiting for the series to arrive?
I've been involved with this series for 13 years, beginning with the planning of the first Starfy game, so this game is like my own child. With this North American release, I feel as though my own child is making a major debut. I am also anxious as to whether or not the game will be accepted and appreciated by everyone in North America. I'd like you all to use your power to make Starfy into a magnificent character that is in no way inferior to any of the senior Nintendo characters.

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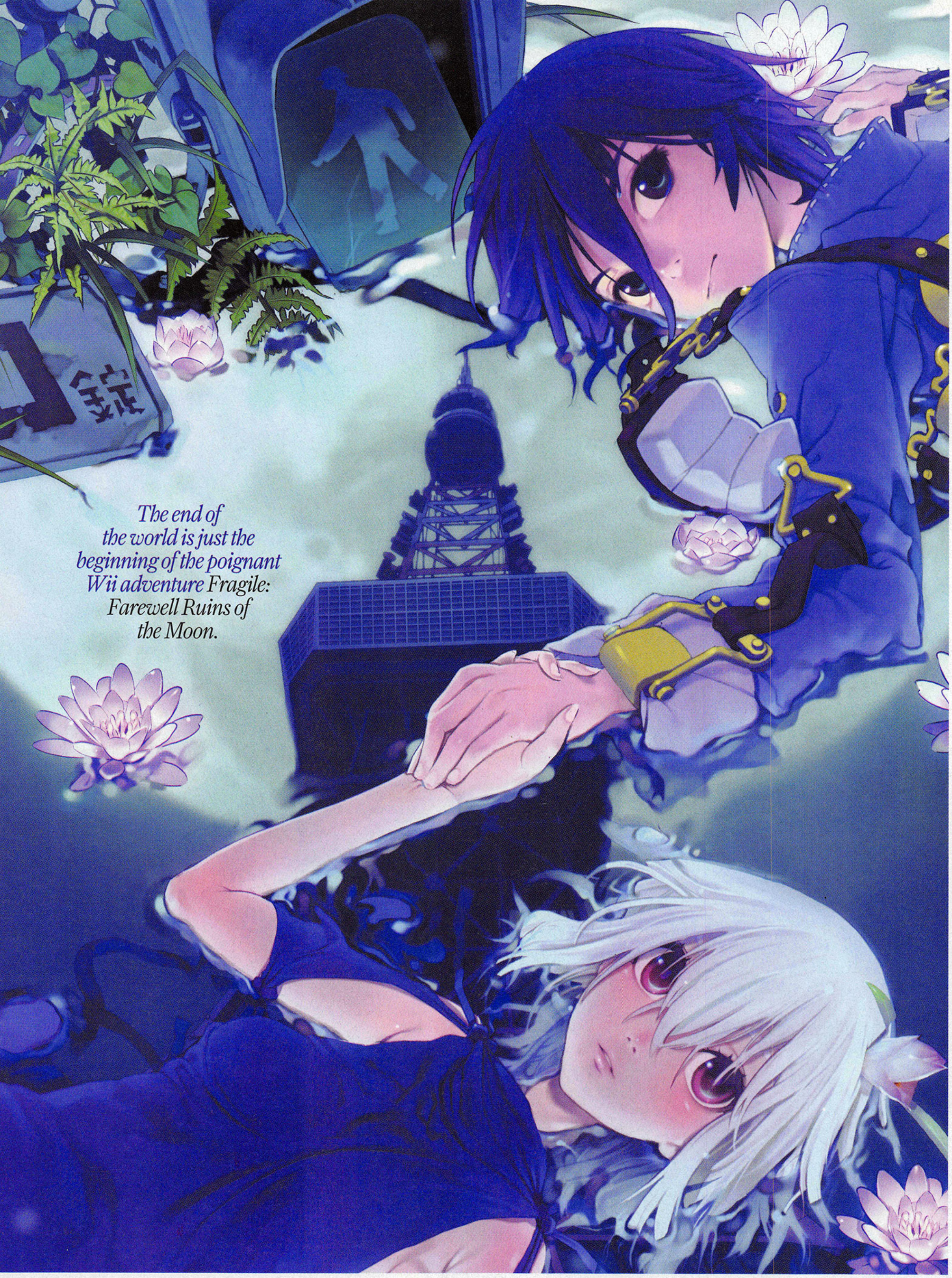


The end of the world is just the beginning of the poignant Wii adventure Fragile: Farewell Ruins of the Moon.

BY CASEY LOE

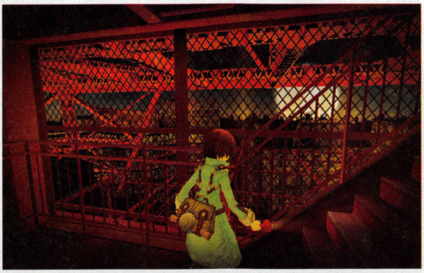
Desolation Nation

Shopping malls are crumbling. Bridges are rotting away. Nature is reclaiming the freeways. The world has ended, and everyone is dead. It would be the worst possible ending for any other game, but it's nothing more than the backstory to Fragile, a mystery adventure set in the ruins of modern-day Tokyo.

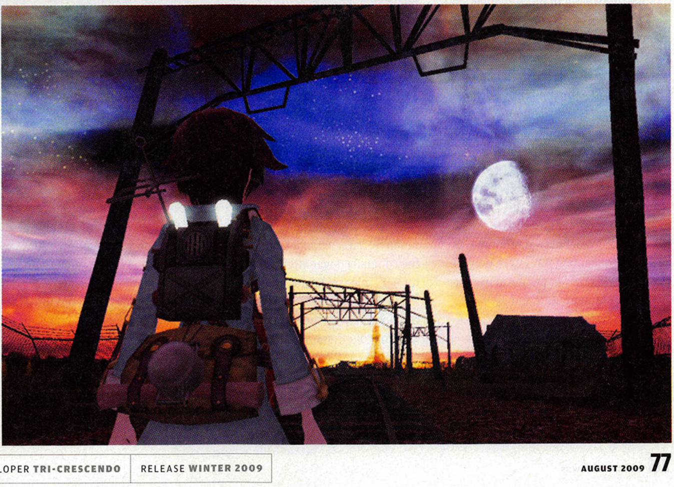
Fifteen-year-old hero Seto is too young to remember the world before it ended. He grew up in the care of an old man who lived in an observatory, the only other survivor he's ever met. But now that man is dead, and Seto is venturing off toward the tower that dominates the skyline, hoping he'll discover someone else with whom to share his life. His journey will take him through shopping plazas and amusement parks, desolate ruins of a life he will never know. He travels at night, finding his way through abandoned subway stations with the sickly glow of an ancient flashlight. He'll barely need it on the surface, where the game's lonely setpieces are lit by the stunning beauty of a star-drenched sky, made all the more radiant by the lack of light from the deserted world below.

Seto doesn't much care how or why the world ended; postapocalyptic Tokyo is the only world he's ever known. But of course we care, and the game is full of clues that will lead players to a definitive answer. The mysterious cataclysm came suddenly, but not entirely without warning—the victims had a little bit of time to consider their fate, and gather their parting thoughts. These thoughts survive on the artifacts the people left behind, like a cell phone into which a girl recorded a final audio message, begging whoever finds it not to forget her. (Alas, she filled up the memory before she could get to her name.) Other thoughts linger mysteriously on treasured mementos; a dog collar revealing the end of the humanity through the eyes of a faithful pet, or the toy of a child, who remained oblivious about what was happening around him. Most of these reflections are tragic, many are poignant, and a few are oddly hilarious, such as a video-game cartridge holding the final regrets of an RPG fan who wished he had come up with a worthy name for his hero instead of hastily hammering out "AAAA" on the character-creation screen. Let's all hope that we can come up with something slightly deeper when oblivion rolls around for us.

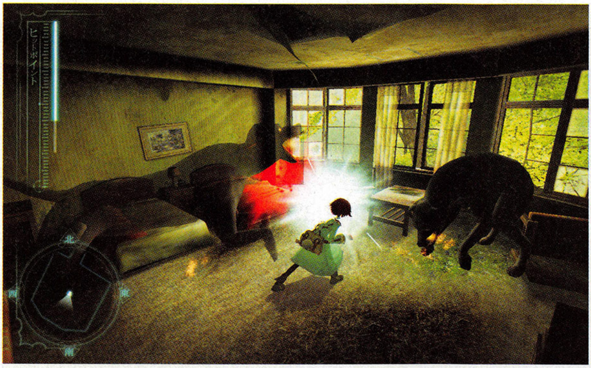
As you might have guessed, Fragile is set entirely in a dark section of the emotional spectrum that few games ever visit. It has some horror-esque shocks, but Fragile's mood is not so much scary as it is sad and unsettling. However, the game is by no means depressing; exploring the ruins of modern civilization is a strangely engaging experience, and the top-notch artists at co-developer tri-Crescendo have done a spec-



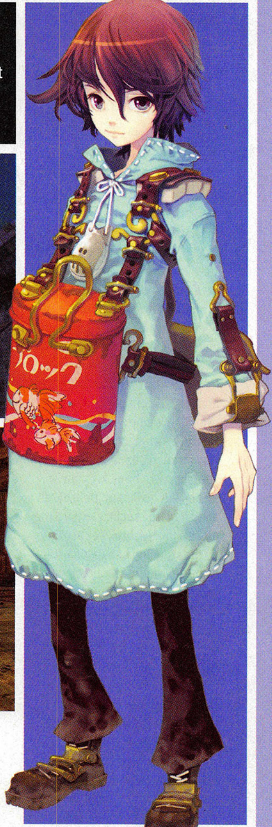
The end of the world would be a boon for astronomers if they weren't all dead.

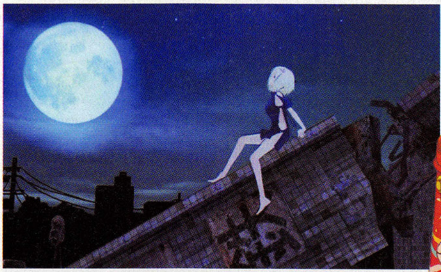


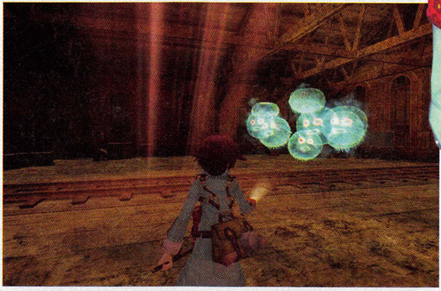
PLATFORM **Wii** | PUBLISHER **XSEED** | DEVELOPER **TRI-CRESCENDO** | RELEASE **WINTER 2009**



[Left] Feral ghost dogs are among the foes that Seto will have to contend with.





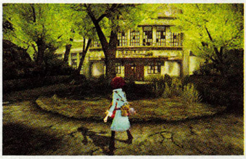


tacular job of capturing the tiny details—fading movie posters, weeds breaking through concrete, moldering wallpaper—that make visiting modern ruins such a fascinating experience (see the sidebar). And the artists behind Fragile have achieved what few other games with postapocalyptic settings have: they've found beauty as well as bleakness in the end of the world. When Seto first steps outside of his home into a flooded parking lot filled with night-blooming lilies, the end of humanity doesn't seem all that bad.

Fragile is a perfect example of a genre Japanese players refer to as "funiki games," art-focused titles in which the entire game is built around capturing a specific mood and atmosphere, often to the detriment of the gameplay. (Fragile, sadly, is no exception—its simplistic action-RPG combat does indeed feel rough and unsatisfying.) Atmosphere-driven games have had a tough time in North America; titles like Siren, Rule of Rose, and Killer 7 have won critical praise and small cults of admirers but found little mass-market success. Ken Berry, XSEED's director of marketing and business development, agrees that Fragile is a difficult title to pigeonhole into conventional Western genres. "People shouldn't come in expecting a standard RPG, but rather an overall fascinating experience in a postapocalyptic world," he suggests. But Berry thinks that Western audiences are more receptive to this style of game than other publishers give them credit for. "Shadow of the Colossus is an atmosphere-driven game that comes to mind for stirring a lot of emotions, and that title did very well in the US," he notes.

Fragile was published in Japan by Namco Bandai, but the company never intended it for a US release. Fortunately, XSEED had already forged a relationship with the company by working together on Retro Game Challenge for the DS. "It was an easy decision about wanting to bring the title over," explains Berry. "As soon as we played the Japanese release we fell in love with the entire cinematic experience. The eye-catching art style and graphics, the emotional story, the haunting music; these were all elements that really drew us into the apocalyptic world of Fragile." Conversations with Namco Bandai began just after the Japanese launch, but the deal took several months to finalize. Now that it's official, XSEED has a hell of a localization job ahead of them; the game is fully voiced and packed with Japanese background graphics that are essential to communicating the story, such as clues hidden in graffiti and hand-drawn maps full of hastily scribbled notes. "Since the game is set in Japan we figured it would be strange to see graffiti in English, so currently we are trying to show the translation of the graffiti as subtitles," says localization manager Kenji Hosoi. "I don't

[Below] Who knew the apocalypse would be so lush and green?



think it's possible to translate every background sign, but we'll definitely try to get everything to show in English as long as the game specs permit it."

Localizing the voices will be an even greater challenge, as the Japanese release features a lot of top anime talent, and poor casting could easily drain the human drama from a lot of powerful scenes. "We have some big shoes to fill as the original Japanese voice-overs are stellar," agrees Hosoi, who is pursuing a full localization but also hopes to retain the original voice track as a selectable option. (No final decision yet, but "it looks pretty promising at this point," he reports.) One thing that Hosoi doesn't intend to localize is the Japanese-language vocal tracks by up-and-coming singer Aoi Teshima, which he's perfectly happy with as is. Finally, while it's unlikely that we'll get to see any significant gameplay changes for the North American release, we may yet get a superior version of the game. "The team is enthusiastic about having their title released over here, and are looking into other possible extras specific to the US release," says Hosoi "We've got our fingers crossed here as we anxiously await what they may be able to come up with for us."

Whatever the changes, Fragile's mournful tone, stunning graphics, and compelling mysteries are already miles away from anything that's ever been released for Wii. We'll learn whether that's a recipe for success or failure when the apocalypse hits this winter.

PHOTOGRAPHS COPYRIGHT ©2006 SHIBAKOUEN HAMUTARO

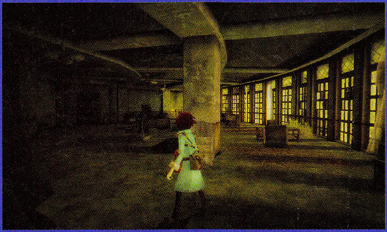
REAL RUINS of MODERN-DAY JAPAN

Kouga Family Land closed in 1985, and nature has been slowly reclaiming it ever since.

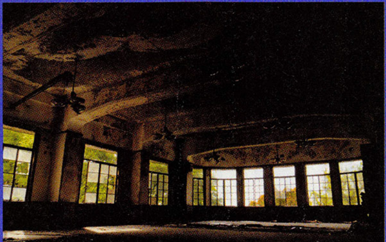
A journey through mysteriously abandoned amusement parks, hotels, and public schools may sound like a post-apocalyptic fantasy, but in Japan, such modern-day ruins aren't hard to find. With a dwindling population and a steady migration of young people to big cities, many Japanese communities have found themselves at the brink of becoming ghost towns. Several bet big on transforming themselves into tourist destinations with amusement parks, spa resorts, specialty schools, and other large public-works projects. When these projects failed, they were often just left to rot.

Touring and photographing these modern ruins has become something of a niche hobby in Japan. Visitors can purchase a multitude of ruins-themed guidebooks and glossy photo collections in Japanese bookstores, and Web searches for "haikyo" (*ruins*) will turn up hundreds of photo sites and blogs (in both Japanese and English) that document moldering hotels, schools, and the ever-popular—and especially common—amusement parks. Many sites have been heavily vandalized, but plenty remain in good condition, and every so-called haikyoist has photos of perfectly preserved rooms found in crumbling apartment buildings or grown-over hotels, complete with immaculately made beds, carefully arranged furniture, and inexplicably abandoned personal mementos under a quarter-inch of dust.

When viewing such scenes, it isn't hard to imagine that you're the last survivor at the end of the world. Fragile producer Kentaro Kawashima has confirmed that such photos, as well as his own childhood experiences exploring his town's abandoned sewer system, were major inspirations for the game. He sent his art team to tour many modern-day ruins and use them as primary sources. As a result, there are more than a few game areas that bear a striking resemblance to famous real-life haikyo sites.



Fragile's hotel strongly resembles the abandoned Maya Tourist Hotel outside of Kobe, a legendary haikyo spot. Note the nearly identical lighting fixtures.



29

Power Profiles

DATE OF BIRTH
October 17, 1971

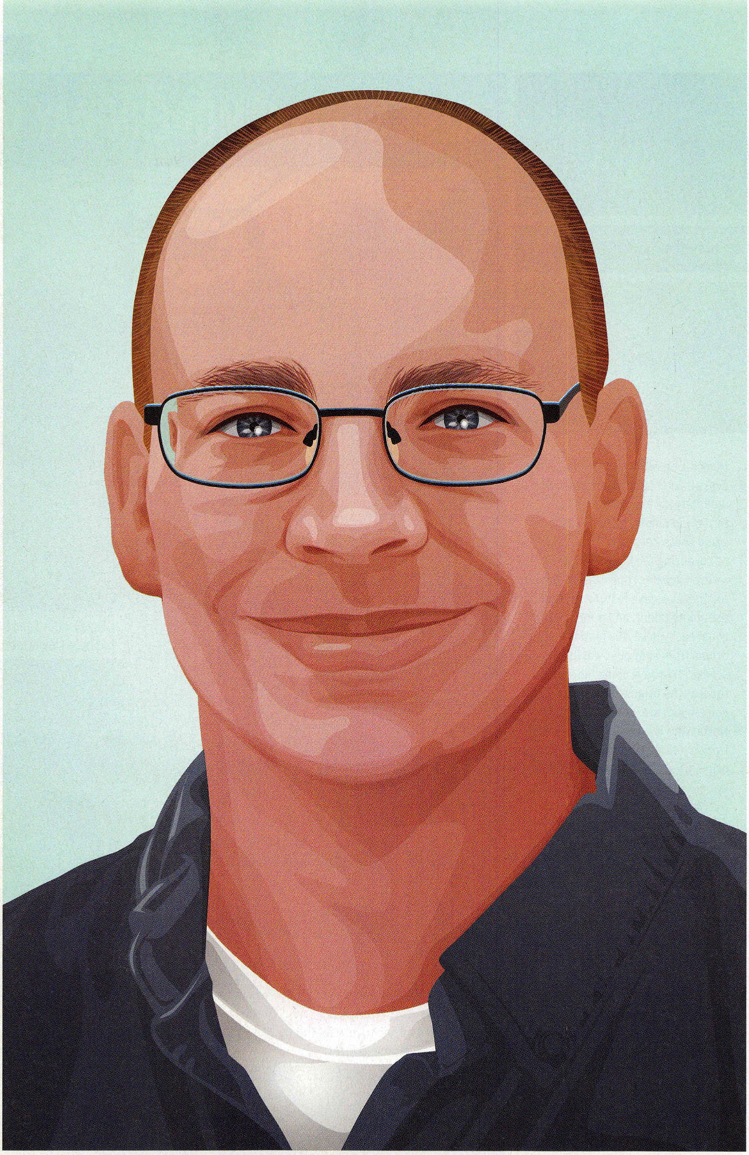
BIRTHPLACE
Kenosha, Wisconsin

POSITION
Creative director, WayForward Technologies

BEST KNOWN FOR
Directing fan favorites such as Shantae and Contra 4; getting a letter printed in Nintendo Power Vol. 6

FAVORITE FOOD
Crab legs and pasta

CURRENT PROJECTS
An unannounced 2-D DS action title



Matt Bozon

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Though developer WayForward Technologies has been making games for Nintendo systems for approximately a decade, the company has only recently been getting a much-deserved chance to step into the spotlight. That opportunity is thanks in large part to critical successes such as Contra 4 for DS, LIT for WiiWare, and Mighty Flip Champs! for DSiWare, and one of the people responsible for many of those titles is Matt Bozon, WayForward's creative director. A hardcore gamer and animation fan growing up, Bozon turned his interests into a career; he's involved in some way in virtually every title that WayForward creates (and even some that they end up not creating) and he has designed or directed more than 50 games, including cult hit Shantae on Game Boy Color. We're always eager to see what Bozon and WayForward are working on next.

NINTENDO POWER **How did you first become involved with the video game industry?**

MATT BOZON In 1992 I was training in the CalArts Character Animation department hoping to break into TV. I heard about a Super Nintendo game my classmate Rob [Buchanan] was working on for Voldi Way, founder of the one-man-show WayForward Technologies. They kindly cut me in on the action, and I caught the game developer's bug. We made games together during the 16-bit boom out of an apartment, and eventually Voldi stopped writing us personal checks and took us on as employees. After all these years I'm still working side by side with both of these amazing guys!

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Since kindergarten I wanted to be an animator. I grew up creating characters, drawing comics, and making flipbooks. I played a mountain of Nintendo games, and even designed a few on paper, but I never thought of it as a career choice until much later.

You obviously have a huge passion for 8- and 16-bit games. What are some of your favorites?

I do like pixels. NES, Super Nintendo, and Game Boy are my magnetic north. I grew up with Pong and Atari, but that was just filling time between arcade visits. Once we got Super Mario Bros., the home arcade dream became real. Castlevania, Zelda, Metroid, and Mega Man 2 made me forget arcades, and later Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts, Super Metroid, Contra III, and Zelda: A Link to the Past branded me for life. I play these games in constant rotation, but there are some newer games, like Luigi's Mansion, that I love just as much.

What does your job as creative director entail?

I lead the design team, manage the company's brand, and try to influence the kinds of titles we take on. I write a lot of game pitches, and help out the other directors. I still try to direct my own game now and then, like Mighty Flip Champs! for DSiWare.

What are the origins of Shantae? Do you have any standout memories of working on that title?

My wife, Erin, came up with the character originally. I met her in the CalArts animation department, and after college we started pitching Shantae around with programmer Jimmy Huey, but no bites. Six years later we all found ourselves working at WayForward, and got the chance to develop the game for real. We worked on Shantae for two years, and then showed it to Capcom one fateful E3 and got a distribution deal. Da-da-da-daaaaah! It was like pulling out the Master Sword.

Why did Shantae Advance not come to fruition? And what are your latest thoughts on bringing Shantae back?

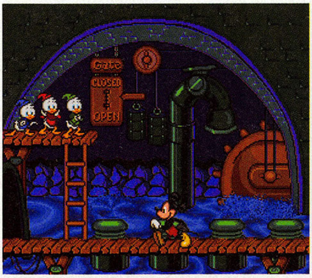
We tried to go bigger and better, but it required more cash and a fully loaded team to take past the demo phase. We approached many publishers to get backing, but at the time a Shantae sequel was too "risky." Since then we've made several demos, including a beautiful DS version. We'd love to bring it to DSiWare, but right now it's too early to say for sure. Fingers crossed.

WayForward has made a lot of games over the years, but since Contra 4, you guys have sort of earned the reputation of authentically bringing classic franchises into modern times. What appeals to you about that concept?

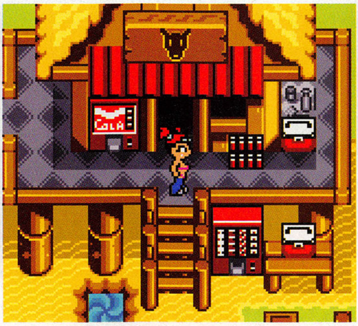
It's fun to dive into the guts of a great game and truly understand it. We try to tap into the inspiration that created them, and carry the best parts forward. Which sometimes means leaving things alone. For example,

GAMEOGRAPHY

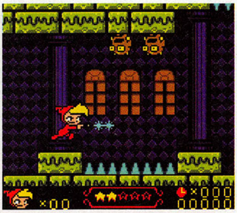
Bozon and his colleagues at WayForward are best known for their hardcore titles such as Contra 4, but they've also worked on numerous licensed games aimed primarily at younger players.



MICKEY'S ULTIMATE CHALLENGE
1994, SUPER NES
GAME DESIGNER/ARTIST

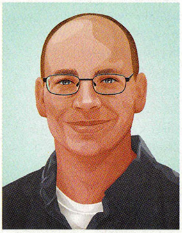


XTREME SPORTS
1999, GAME BOY COLOR
LEAD DESIGNER/DIRECTOR



WENDY: EVERY WITCH WAY
2001, GAME BOY COLOR
LEAD DESIGNER/DIRECTOR

Power Profiles



the 8-bit sound of a Mario coin can't be improved upon. It's part of the brand. It's like the Contra "ping" damage sound. You have to leave that stuff intact or you're messing with perfection. As Voldi says, "If it ain't broke, don't break it."

Do you prefer working on new IPs or classic IPs?
Hmm. With classic brands, you get characters born from gameplay, which is best. So, if I could create an IP from scratch with those lessons in mind, that'd be my preference. But there are still a lot of classic brands I'd like to take a whack at.

What classic brands would you like to tackle next?
Castlevania's Kid Dracula, a 2-D Metroid, or Mega Man and Tron Bonne would be awesome to try someday. I've also chased after The Guardian Legend and Rygar a few times. I guess I'd like to do another questy action game of some sort.

From an outsider's perspective, these seem like dream projects, especially for someone who's a fan of the franchise. How do you feel about being able to contribute to these universes?
They are dream projects, definitely. We're very fortunate to get the opportunity to re-invigorate brands like Contra and A Boy and his Blob. Sometimes we need to take bold steps in order to move forward, but we're always respectful of the original vision.

You seem like a true-blue 2-D guy. What's it like being a 2-D guy in this modern era of 3-D gaming?
Yeah, 2-D all the way. But I do enjoy 3-D games too, especially GameCube's Resident Evil, RE4, and Mario Kart in all of its forms. It might not fit the profile, but I also like FPS PC games as long as I don't have to play too seriously. When a 3-D game is as accurate and responsive as a 2-D game, I tend to like it.

What are your thoughts on the state of 2-D gaming in general?
Hmm. It feels like it's in transition right now. The retro and pixel scene is thriving on DS. You've got great stuff from Atlus and a few other shops. But after seeing Wario Land: Shake It! I'm ready for more fully animated games at higher resolutions. We've only seen the tip o' the flat iceberg.

> *"Sometimes we need to take bold steps in order to move forward, but we're always respectful of the original vision."*

WayForward seems to develop almost exclusively for Nintendo systems. Is there a reason those are your systems of choice?
Nintendo's always been an inspiration to me. They wrote the book on great games and great hardware! Nintendo's the reason I do this for a living.

Some of WayForward's most notable projects, such as Sigma Star Saga and Contra 4, have been clearly aimed at the hardcore audience. What's your philosophy when it comes to hardcore vs. casual games?
I find it easier to develop games I'd want to play myself, which often means there's going to be a stiff challenge mixed in. When it's a game for a casual or first-timer audience, we try to keep things lighter. But we still stick to good core gaming. Maybe we'll convert a few into hardcore gamers.

You guys were pretty quick to attempt WiiWare and DSiWare. What appeals to you about those delivery methods? How does your approach to game design differ when compared to retail products?
Distribution and manufacturing have always been barriers for us. So we're eager to explore new ways of getting our original games to the players. Our approach is basically the same, but we scale back to keep the file sizes down.

WayForward has been around a while, but you seem to be getting more recognition as of late. How does that feel, and what do you attribute that to?
It's nice to have hard work

GAMEOGRAPHY

THE SCORPION KING: SWORD OF OSIRIS
2002, GAME BOY ADVANCE
LEAD DESIGNER/DIRECTOR

SHANTAE
2002, GAME BOY COLOR
DIRECTOR/ANIMATION/BACKGROUNDS/LEVEL DESIGN

GODZILLA
MECHAGODZILLA
MEGALON

GODZILLA: DOMINATION!
2002, GAME BOY ADVANCE
DESIGNER/DIRECTOR

> *"…I go somewhere quiet and try to imagine the sounds of the game playing out in my head. When it sounds right, I try to add visuals and actions."*

appreciated! I'd attribute the recent success to the large number of talented people we've got here. We've got more teams and more stability within the company. It allows us to take on more ambitious projects. We've also got dedicated PR, which we didn't have before.

How have things changed in the video game industry since you started? Are there any especially exciting or disturbing trends you've noticed recently?
Well, the teams are a lot bigger, which requires more management and more meetings. So it's refreshing to work with smaller teams from time to time. On the subject of trends, I'm disappointed to see the rise in profane language in many games. It feels like an artificial way of making a game feel more hardcore. Until that trend reverses, I'll be sticking to Nintendo products around the house.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
I like zeroing in on subtle character movement and control. You get to work closely with animators and programmers to give a character life. I also like trying to connect with the audience, making them laugh or react to what's onscreen.

If you weren't making games, what do you think you'd be doing?
Probably comics. I like both the restriction and freedom of comics. Working with small teams and creating small doses of entertainment, writing, laying out scenes—it includes a lot of what I liked about Game Boy Color development.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
After I cry, I go somewhere quiet and try to imagine the sounds of the game playing out in my head. When it sounds right, I try to add visuals and actions. It's a good way to establish the game's pacing and tempo. I also seek advice from the other designers. They're pretty sharp.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
Being a longtime Nintendo fan, I'd have to be crazy not to say Shigeru Miyamoto and Gunpei Yokoi. Mario, Metroid, Zelda, and the Game Boy are the stuff of legends. I'm also a fan of Shinji Mikami [not only] for Resident Evil, but also for the incredibly misunderstood P.N.03. C'mon, it's a dance shooter!

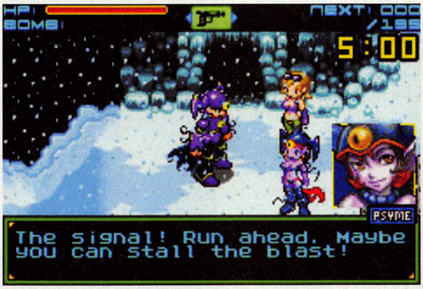
Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I love watching serialized animation from the '80s like *Transformers*, *Bionic Six*, *Thundercats*, and *Mighty Orbots*, mostly for the horrible plots like "Lion-O arm-wrestles a caveman" or "Which is the real Optimus Prime!?" It's too good. *Lupin* and [*My Neighbor*] *Totoro*, *Batman: The Animated Series*, and Carl Barks's Uncle Scrooge comics are other favorites.

Speaking of Transformers, who should win in a fight between Megatron, Shockwave, and Starscream? And what's your stance on the Michael Bay Transformers films?
Megatron always wins, but he'll probably delegate most tasks to Shockwave anyway. Starscream has substitute-teacher syndrome. His management style invites mutiny. You can't just scream at people and expect results. As for the movies, the only real one is the 1986 *Transformers: The Movie*. The new ones don't have "the touch."

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
I've been building up a pretty sizable game collection over the years, which I try to keep pristine. I also enjoy LEGOs, collecting toys and anime figures, and designing new characters or writing stories.

So, while you're chatting with us, got any new game announcements you'd like to make?
We've got more DSiWare in development, but nothing we can reveal just yet. We've got really fun Wii retail games in development, which will be announced shortly. We're really busy!

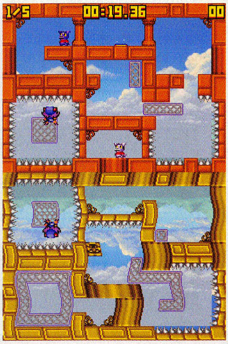
If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
Hmm. Gonna go with teleporting.



The signal! Run ahead. Maybe you can stall the blast!

SIGMA STAR SAGA
2005, GAME BOY ADVANCE
LEAD DESIGNER/DIRECTOR

CONTRA 4
2007, DS
LEAD DESIGNER/DIRECTOR



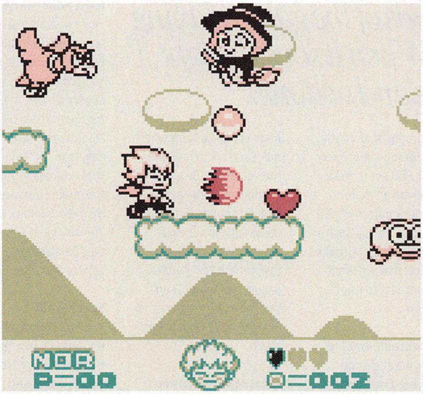
MIGHTY FLIP CHAMPS!
2009, DSiWARE
LEAD DESIGNER/DIRECTOR

KID DRACULA

It's what happens when you mix Castlevania and adorable.

KONAMI
GAME BOY
KID DRACULA
Nintendo

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
RELEASE DATE: 1993
COVERED IN ISSUES: 45, 47
GIANT CHICKEN BOSSES: 1



A winking witch makes a pass at Kid Dracula. Uninterested, he responds by blasting love itself.

Many video games take themselves too seriously. That's why it's always nice to see a game company loosen up and do something a little silly. Konami has a long history of such lightheartedness, from a superdeformed version of Hideo Kojima's Snatcher to an entire series of games that poke fun at its Gradius titles (aptly named Parodius). In that same vein is Kid Dracula, which gives us a silly spin on the Castlevania series.

The original Kid Dracula title was released for the Famicom (the Japanese version of the NES) in 1991 under the name Akumajou Special: Boku Dracula-kun, but, sadly, it was never released in the US. When its Game Boy sequel arrived two years later, Konami localized it with its easier-to-pronounce title of Kid Dracula.

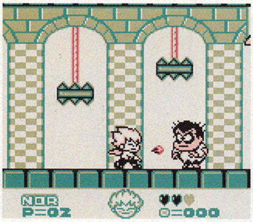
In the game, you control the titular Kid Dracula, although it's never really explained whether the character is a cutesified version of ubiquitous Castlevania bad guy Dracula, or his heroic son Alucard. (Portraits of Dracula in the background of the first stage seem to imply the latter, however.)

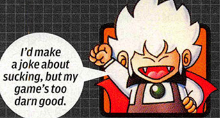
Either way, Kid Dracula is forced to step up when the evil demon Garamoth (who appears as a boss in Castlevania: Symphony of the Night) challenges him.

Surprisingly, the action feels like a hybrid of Castlevania's gameplay and the classic Mega Man titles. Kid Dracula begins his adventure armed with a fireball that can be charged up à la the Blue Bomber's Mega Buster, and a magic spell that transforms KD into a bat for a few seconds. Additionally, after the first few stages, our vampiric hero learns to walk on the ceiling, deploy a defensive umbrella, and use spells such as homing fireballs.

Between stages, coins you've earned during battle can be gambled on a roulette-style minigame or spent on a chance to play four different minigames to earn extra lives. These fun little diversions include a surprisingly action-packed variant of rock-paper-scissors.

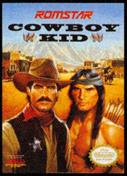
Kid Dracula may not be Castlevania canon, but it's got a goofy charm that will win over even the most die-hard Belmont purist. It's also a solid platformer, making it worth tracking down for fans of the genre. **—PHIL T.**



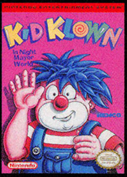

I'd make a joke about sucking, but my game's too darn good.

KIDDIN' AROUND

Kid Dracula wasn't the only kid that got his own game back in the 8-bit days. Here are some other stars of "kiddy games."



COWBOY KID
He may have looked like a reject from The Village People, but Cowboy Kid's game was an homage to Konami's Mystical Ninja series.



KID KLOWN
This freaky-looking character got a much-needed makeover for his second game, released for the SNES.

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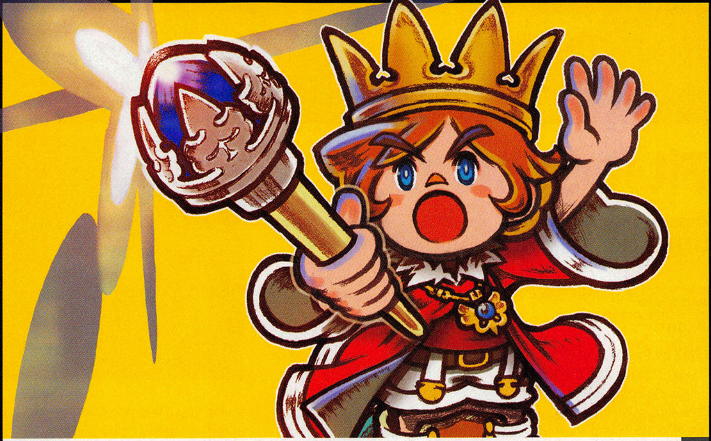
REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

With gameplay reminiscent of hits like Pikmin, Animal Crossing, and Sim City, Little King's Story for Wii is as fun as it is adorable. Find out exactly why in our full review.



LITTLE KING'S STORY 88

OVERLORD: DARK LEGEND 91

DAWN OF DISCOVERY 91

1st day 09 : 00

Yuzu
Hey moron, try calling my family "boring" one more time...

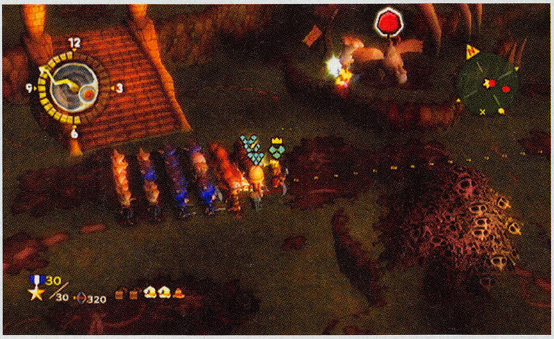
SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SURVIVOR 90

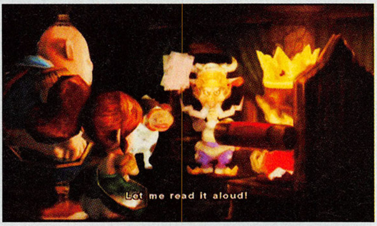
1 Murray 0 0 40
2 Nadal 0 1 A
RBS
prince

VIRTUA TENNIS 2009 89

+

The Bigs 2 90
Dawn of Discovery 91
Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits 91
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 89
Little King's Story 88
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker/ Black Ace 90
Overlord Minions 91
Overlord: Dark Legend 91
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 90
Virtua Tennis 2009 89




Let me read it aloud!

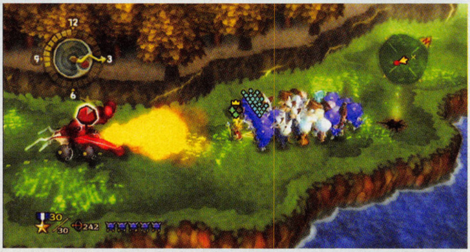
Fit for a King

LITTLE KING'S STORY

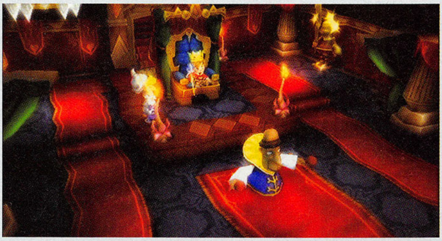
RATING: **9.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **CING/TOWN FACTORY**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Don't be fooled by that title. Though it may sound like something based on a children's book, Little King's Story is a deep, addictive, and thoroughly enjoyable effort that every serious gamer should experience. It places you on the diminutive throne of an upstart monarch charged with uniting the world under his benevolent rule. At first your kingdom consists of only a few subjects, a modest abode, and a cow. But as you amass treasure, fund various construction projects, and rid neighboring lands of monsters and opposing despots, your glorious nation will steadily expand (as will the grandeur of your castle). The king mustn't get his own hands dirty, of course, so you'll command your subjects to do your bidding. As your kingdom grows, you can assign followers to an increasing assortment of occupations, and much of the strategy comes from assembling the right entourage for the task at hand. It's two parts Pikmin, one part Animal Crossing, and one part SimCity—a winning formula concocted with the kind of TLC you'd find in one of Nintendo's first-party titles.



To ensure that formula never grows stale, Little King's Story constantly introduces new elements. Your primary objective is to defeat the other kings, but you can spend literally hours and hours on the myriad side quests and other diversions the game has to offer, whether it's finding parts for a flying machine or collecting recipes for one of your many wives (his majesty is good with the ladies). Mix in all the different ways you can upgrade your realm, and you'll find yourself saying "just a few more minutes" until it's suddenly 2 o'clock in the morning.



Graphically, Little King's Story isn't exactly pushing the limits of the Wii hardware, but this is a prime example of superb art design winning out over technical shortcomings. An irresistible charm pervades everything about the game, and its creators' attention to detail brings the world to life. As you roam the kingdom, you'll witness its citizens going about their daily lives: farmers till the fields, workers lay out blankets for a picnic lunch, and school children play on the swing set during recess. Sometimes two people will even fall in love, at which point you can lead them to church to tie the knot. Who knew tyranny could be so adorable? The downside is that you'll likely grow quite attached to your subjects, leaving you heartbroken when one of them falls in battle. (Fortunately, they'll often wash up alive on shore the next day as long as you keep your casualties to a minimum.)

Aside from the occasional bouts of grief, Little King's Story is quite funny thanks to some clever writing and a motley crew of eccentric bosses. Your encounters with these rival monarchs are pretty creative from a gameplay standpoint, as well; one especially amusing confrontation involves bouncing your rotund adversary around the battlefield like a pinball table. Tying everything together is a sublime classical soundtrack that fits the proceedings like a glove. My only real complaint is that the camera doesn't always cooperate, but rarely did that detract from how much fun I was having.

One of the unexpected benefits of Wii boasting less horsepower than its competitors is that the lower development costs enable creators to take chances. Though Little King's Story doesn't utilize any motion controls whatsoever, the game never would have been possible on another console simply because it's so quirky and experimental. Needless to say, the results of this particular experiment are a resounding success.

It's good to be king. **—STEVE T.**

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT COMING OUT OF THIS YEAR'S E3?

Justin Cheng

Hands down, I'm most excited about Metroid: Other M. An action game by Nintendo and Team Ninja? How can you *not* be excited?

Chris Hoffman

I've gotta go with Super Mario Galaxy 2. I loved the original and I'm blown away that Nintendo is making a direct sequel. 2010 can't come soon enough.

Casey Loe

Most of Nintendo's big guns are coming in 2010, but third parties have picked up the ball for '09. Silent Hill, Crystal Bearers, and Muramasa top my list.

Chris Shepperd

Without a doubt, it's the prospects of a new 3-D Metroid title. Team Ninja picking up the job can only mean even more awesomeness.

Chris Slate

A new side-scrolling Mario game...with Wii graphics... and four-player action? Wa-hoooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

David F. Smith

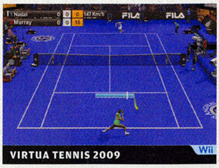
Ninja Gaiden proved that Team Ninja can make a very, very good action-adventure game, so I trust they'll do something special with Metroid: Other M.

Phil Theobald

I am thrilled—absolutely thrilled—that Monkey Island is back. Thank you, Telltale! Now how about a new Maniac Mansion game?

Steve Thomason

Both Silent Hill and Red Steel 2 are shaping up every bit as well as I'd hoped. It's great to see third parties finally putting some serious effort behind their Wii titles.



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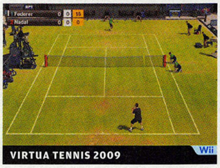


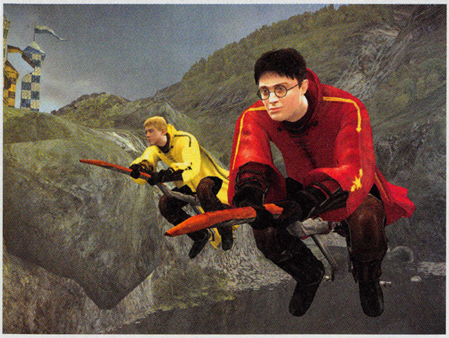
VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

With an array of wacky minigames (such as Pirate Wars, in which you try to sink pirate ships by hitting tennis balls at them), as well as real players and courts, Virtua Tennis 2009 has a lot going for it. Of course, the franchise is known better for its arcadey gameplay than for its features; unfortunately for those expecting a quick pick-up-and-play experience, Virtua Tennis 2009 has more of a learning curve than either its predecessors in the series or Sumo Digital's other Wii tennis game, Sega Superstars Tennis. In this game you have to factor in your timing as you hit the ball (instead of using the Control Stick to determine ball placement, which is less realistic but much easier). A meter that pops up directly over your character certainly helps, but the game becomes mostly about swinging when the meter is just right. Adding the Wii MotionPlus accessory to the mix makes it feel more like real tennis, but it also means there's more of a learning curve if you want to aim accurately. (And the fact that you have to recalibrate the Wii MotionPlus accessory after each point can be annoying after a while.) Still, Virtua Tennis 2009 is ultimately good fun; you just have to do some work to get the most enjoyment out of it. —**JUSTIN C.**



Halfway There

HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE

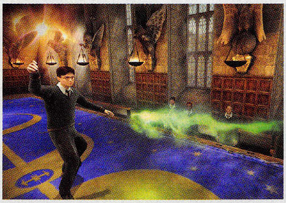
RATING: 5.5

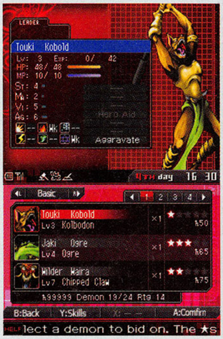
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CASUAL STUDIOS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

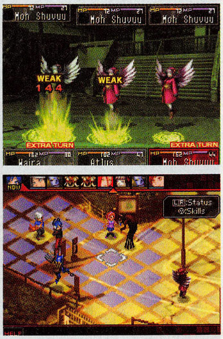
The world of Harry Potter is a rich setting for an interactive adventure, and if the Wii adaptation of Half-Blood Prince does anything especially well, it's that it presents a meticulous re-creation of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Unfortunately, as impressive as the halls of Hogwarts are to look at as you run through them, there's never anything especially fun to do at the school.

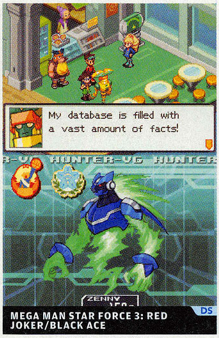
The action is split fairly evenly between dueling (a shallow combat system that nonetheless looks nice and captures the spirit of spellcasting), potion making, and Quidditch (the last two of which are beat-the-clock minigames that are kind of fun at first but soon wear thin). You spend as much time running through the school to get to these events as you do playing them, and since traversing the game world is limited to simply jogging in the direction you want to go, those lovingly re-created Hogwarts halls become long stretches of boredom.

Those aspects of the game aren't truly bad, however, and for many Potter fans, immersing themselves in this version of the wizarding world will be worthwhile despite its shortcomings. The only irredeemable part of the game is its storytelling. Video games aren't generally expected to deliver a top-notch narrative, but since this one is based on the story of a film, which is in turn based on a beloved book, one would hope that it could at least deliver a passable retelling of the major points. Instead, essential plotlines are crunched into one or two lines of dialogue or not mentioned at all, resulting in disjointed cinematics that will baffle anyone who doesn't already know the story. And for those who do, the big moments that you look forward to seeing are never satisfyingly delivered. —**CHRIS SL.**

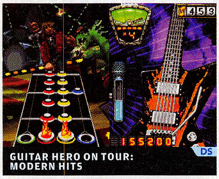




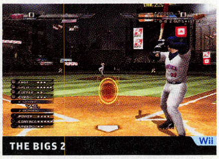




MEGA MAN STAR FORCE 3: RED JOKER/BLACK ACE



GUITAR HERO ON TOUR: MODERN HITS



THE BIGS 2

Devil's Advocate

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SURVIVOR

RATING: **8.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS USA**
DEVELOPER: **ATLUS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Looks, as they say, can be deceiving. The bright, cartoony exterior of Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor conceals a real sleeper of a game, a hardcore strategy-RPG mixed with a grim supernatural horror story. Devil Survivor looks like it has a lot in common with the Persona series—the simpler, faster-moving, more user-friendly end of the Megami Tensei range. But in fact, it's a lot more like Nocturne for the PlayStation 2; no one's going to breeze through quickly, and coming up with winning tactics takes a lot of time and mental effort.

Luckily, Atlus knows how to reward that effort. Devil Survivor starts off with a great concept (demons invade a not-quite-future Tokyo) and brings it to life with top-notch art direction (if you've ever been to Japan, you'll have a lot of fun sightseeing through the background graphics). Composer Takami Asano backs that up with a great rock 'n' roll soundtrack, and the storytelling is strong in most of the ways that matter.

The dialogue and character development have some problems, however. Someone involved in development hasn't heard that female characters don't have to be wishy-washy stereotypes anymore. The plot, though, is thoroughly engrossing, building over seven days of increasing tension and culminating in five fascinating optional endings.

Getting to those endings requires some work. None of the battles in Devil Survivor are easy—you must collect and train an army of demons, and almost every fight calls for careful use of certain special demon powers. Just remember that there's a light at the end of the tunnel. **—DAVID S.**

MEGA MAN STAR FORCE 3: RED JOKER/ BLACK ACE

RATING: **6.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The third entry in the Star Force series is here, and it's virtually identical to its predecessors. Although the series started off enjoyable, it grows stale with the release of each minimally improved sequel. Once again, youthful Geo Stelar fuses with his alien buddy Omega-Xis to form Mega Man and battle evil in both the real world and the Wave World. The story crawls along at a snail's pace, and there's plenty of tedious back-tracking around the game's world. The card-based combat system is still fun and requires some good strategy to build a powerful deck, but the 3-D nature of the battle screen limits Mega Man's movement, which makes the fights less exciting. **—PHIL T.**

GUITAR HERO ON TOUR: MODERN HITS

RATING: **7.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **VICARIOUS VISIONS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

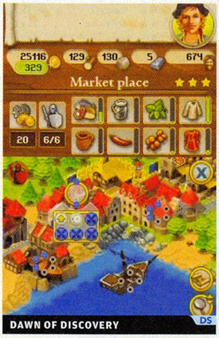
Don't expect many surprises in the third DS installment of Guitar Hero. Guitar Hero On Tour: Modern Hits doesn't mess with the formula: You start a band and work your way through small gigs until you make it to the big time. Once you've played through a song once, you can do various challenges for that song, including playing the bass line and competing in a duel against another rocker. The challenges are a nice twist, but you end up playing the same song far too many times before unlocking a new set. But really your level of enjoyment comes down to whether you like the Modern Hits song list—if bands like Franz Ferdinand, Coldplay, and The Strokes are your thing, you'll find plenty of ways to rock out. **—CHRIS SH.**

THE BIGS 2

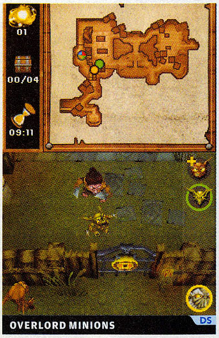
RATING: **6.0**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **BLUE CASTLE GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Perhaps the developers aren't taking things far enough or maybe the great American pastime simply doesn't lend itself well to arcade-style hijinks, but for some reason, The Bigs continues to fall a bit flat. This sophomore effort does boast some welcome improvements over its predecessor: throwing the ball on defense no longer requires you to flick the Wii Remote, and unlike last year's game, the Wii version includes all of the same modes as its counterparts on competing platforms. The lack of online play is a real disappointment, though, and the main single-player mode—Become a Legend—is hampered by its clumsy framework and lame minigames. Like a middling baseball team, The Bigs 2 provides a fun diversion for those lazy Sunday afternoons, but it's unlikely to hold your attention all summer. **—STEVE T.**



DAWN OF DISCOVERY DS



OVERLORD MINIONS DS

DAWN OF DISCOVERY

RATING: 8.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **KEEN GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Dawn of Discovery is proof positive that the DS is absolutely perfect for real-time strategy games. By using the touch screen to control units and access icon-based menus, and letting the top screen show all sorts of valuable information, Dawn of Discovery makes it easy to concentrate on smart and engaging world-building. No complaints about the production quality, either—the game looks and sounds good, both during cut-scenes and in action (although the cinematic voice-overs come off a touch phony). The game suffers a little during combat, a part of the game that forces you to rely more on quick movements than on smart planning. And there is a bit too much tearing down and rebuilding to balance out resources for your citizens. Otherwise, Dawn of Discovery is a solid, lasting title that fits perfectly on the DS. **—CHRIS SH.**

OVERLORD MINIONS

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**
DEVELOPER: **CLIMAX**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Is this a complicated action game, or a simple RTS? Maybe both, but Overlord Minions is a good time either way. Like the Overlord games on consoles, this one's gameplay is clever, and its personality is cleverer still. Along the lines of old favorites like Deception and Dungeon Keeper, as the player you don't get your hands dirty directly. Instead, you control a team of minions (different kinds have different powers) as they venture through top-down 3-D levels. Some puzzles call for a certain minion's skills, whereas others demand that the whole crew cooperate. Learning the stylus control scheme takes all of a minute or two, and Climax gave its game a very British sense of dark humor to keep players coming back. There are deeper DS games than this, but not many that make it so much fun to be the bad guy. **—DAVID S.**

ALSO THE MONTH

Capcom's excellent GameCube remake of Resident Evil is now on Wii with all-new controls as **Resident Evil Archives**.... It's hard to go wrong with giant, transforming robots, but Activision didn't send us review code of **Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen** to let us see how the battling 'bots fare in their latest adventures. In addition to a Wii version, there are two different editions—Autobot and Decepticon—available on DS.... Aspyr's **Treasure World** for DS might not qualify as a typical "game," but its creative simulation aspects and real-world interaction make it stand out from the crowd.... Aksys Games's **Rockin' Pretty** for DS looks girly, but its rhythmic gameplay is fun for anyone, especially the guitar and drum modes. The songs, however, are rather generic.

Dark Reign

OVERLORD: DARK LEGEND

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**
DEVELOPER: **CLIMAX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Overlord: Dark Legend is a visually impressive game that has some genuinely funny moments—which is appropriate for a game that pokes fun at familiar fairy-tale and fantasy conventions, such as Cinderella (the story is essentially a repackaged, darker version of the classic tale) and Little Red Riding Hood, as well as dwarves and elves. The Pikmin-esque real-time strategy gameplay works well for the most part as you direct your minions by pointing at the screen with the Wii Remote. Adding another layer of strategy, there are four minion types—brown, red, blue, and green—each with unique strengths. Red ones shoot fireballs at enemies and can walk through fire, for example, whereas blue ones resurrect fallen allies and can swim.

While it's empowering to have an army like this at your disposal, it's annoying when your underlings aren't as obedient as you'd like. Occasionally they'll just stand in place even if you've ordered them to do otherwise (sometimes it's not their fault; they're just hung up on something in the environment), or they'll take a far more roundabout path to their goal than you expected or wanted. Other irritations include the often-repeated lines of dialogue from minions and random villagers, and the game's frame rate, which isn't always as stable as it should be. These technical issues shouldn't turn you off of playing Dark Legend, though. After all, commanding minions to wreak havoc in a fairy-tale world is just plain fun. **—JUSTIN C.**

[REVIEWS ARCHIVE]

Show 'Em What You Can Do

There were lots of *good* games reviewed last issue, but there were only a handful of *great* games. Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 was the best of the lot—and not just because playing it with the Wii MotionPlus accessory makes it the most authentic sports game around. There were some other standouts, of course, including The Conduit and Boom Blox Bash Party for Wii.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Animal Crossing: City Folk	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Boogie SuperStar	7.0	Electronic Arts	235	E10+
Boom Blox Bash Party	8.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	7.0	Ubisoft	241	T
Brothers in Arms: Double Time	7.0	Ubisoft	235	M
Call of Duty: World at War	8.0	Activision	237	M
Castlevania Judgment	7.0	Konami	236	T
Cate West: The Vanishing Files	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Celebrity Sports Showdown	4.5	EA Sports	235	E
The Conduit	8.0	Sega	243	T
Cooking Mama World Kitchen	6.5	Majesco	236	E
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Dance Dance Revolution Hottest Party 2	8.0	Konami	234	E10+
de Blob	8.0	THQ	234	E
Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop	N/A	Capcom	240	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Destiny of Zorro	2.5	505	243	E10+
Dokapon Kingdom	8.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Don King Boxing	5.5	2K Sports	241	T
Excitebots: Trick Racing	8.0	Nintendo	241	E
FaceBreaker K.O. Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	235	T
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	7.5	System 3	233	E
FIFA Soccer 09 All-Play	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fishing Master: World Tour	7.5	Hudson	238	E
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	7.5	Atari	243	E10+
Grand Slam Tennis	7.5	Electronic Arts	243	E
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus	7.5	Aksys	241	T
Guitar Hero Metallica	N/A	Activision	240	T
Guitar Hero Smash Hits	N/A	Activision	243	T
Guitar Hero World Tour	8.5	Activision	236	T
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	6.5	Natsume	233	E
Help Wanted	4.5	Hudson	242	E10+
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	7.5	LucasArts	243	T
The King of Fighters: The Orochi Saga	8.0	SNK Playmore	235	T
Klonoa	9.0	Namco Bandai	241	E10+
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.0	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
Let's Tap	7.0	Sega	243	E
Line Rider 2: Unbound	5.0	Inxile	234	E
Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked	6.5	Konami	235	E10+
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
Major Minor's Majestic March	6.0	Majesco	241	E
Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario Super Sluggers	7.5	Nintendo	233	E
Monster Lab	6.5	Eidos	236	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
The Munchables	7.0	Namco Bandai	243	E
Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars	8.0	Gamecock	236	E10+
MySims Kingdom	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
MySims Racing	N/A	Electronic Arts	243	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	8.0	Tomy	235	T
NASCAR Kart Racing	6.0	EA Sports	238	E
NBA Live 09 All-Play	4.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Need for Speed Undercover	6.5	Electronic Arts	236	T
Neighborhood Games	N/A	THQ	238	E
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	N/A	Capcom	236	E
New Play Control! Donkey Kong Jungle Beat	N/A	Nintendo	242	E10+
New Play Control! Mario Power Tennis	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
New Play Control! Pikmin	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
NHL 2K9	7.0	2K Sports	234	E10+
Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian: The Video Game	N/A	Majesco	242	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Phantom Brave: We Meet Again	8.0	NIS America	243	T
Pop Star Guitar	N/A	XS Games	236	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2009	N/A	Konami	240	E
Punch-Out!!	8.5	Nintendo	242	E10+
Quantum of Solace	5.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	5.5	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Reel Fishing: Angler's Dream	N/A	Natsume	243	E
Rock Band 2	9.0	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 2	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Revolution	4.5	Konami	235	T
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	7.0	Tecmo	236	T
Sam & Max Season One	7.0	The Adventure Company	233	T
Samba de Amigo	9.0	Sega	234	E
Samurai Shodown Anthology	N/A	SNK Playmore	242	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: Road Trip	7.0	Ubisoft	236	E10+
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
SimCity Creator	6.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Skate It	6.0	Electronic Arts	237	E
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	8.5	SNK Playmore	233	T
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Sonic Unleashed	8.0	Sega	236	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	6.5	Activision	236	T
SPRay	3.0	Tecmo	235	E10+
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	4.0	LucasArts	236	T
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	7.5	LucasArts	233	T
Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World	8.0	Namco Bandai	236	T
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	7.0	Ubisoft	238	M
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	9.0	Electronic Arts	243	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour All-Play	8.5	Electronic Arts	233	E
TNA Impact!	5.0	Midway	235	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	7.0	Eidos	236	T
Ultimate Band	6.0	Disney	235	E
Ultimate Shooting Collection	N/A	UFO	237	E
Up	6.5	THQ	242	E
Wario Land: Shake It!	8.0	Nintendo	234	E
We Cheer	6.0	Namco Bandai	235	E10+
We Ski and Snowboard	6.5	Namco Bandai	239	E
Wii Music	N/A	Nintendo	235	E
WordJong Party	N/A	Destineer	238	E

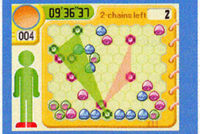
REVIEWER NOTES

SUIKODEN: TIERKREIS

Casey must have been drinking grumpy juice when he reviewed Suikoden: Tierkreis, because it's waaaay better than a 7.0. The story is fantastic, the music is console quality, and recruiting your army of characters is fun and addictive. Some aspects, such as voice acting and equipment management, could have been better, but this is one of the best original RPGs on DS. **—CHRIS H.**

INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS (Wii)

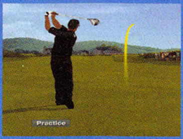
One of the niftiest parts of Staff of Kings is the co-op mode. It's short, but packed with variety. And Henry Jones Sr.'s grunts are hilarious. **—CHRIS H.**



PUCHI PUCHI VIRUS

If the name sounds familiar, it's probably because we reviewed Puchi Puchi Virus way back in Vol. 228 (it got a 7.0). It's now over a year later, and NIS America's charming puzzle game is finally on store shelves. After playing the game again to refresh my memory, I still stand by my original review: the basic gameplay is solid overall, but it's frustrating that the viruses you're trying to eliminate congeal so quickly. **—JUSTIN C.**

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	8.0	THQ	236	T
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	5.0	Activision	243	T
NINTENDO DS				
Age of Empires: Mythologies	7.0	THQ	236	E10+
Avalon Code	8.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
AWAY: Shuffle Dungeon	7.0	Majesco	235	E10+
Big Bang Mini	8.5	SouthPeak	237	E
Black Sigil: Blade of the Exiled	5.0	Graffiti	242	E
Bleach: Dark Souls	8.5	Sega	234	T
Blue Dragon Plus	8.0	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	7.0	Ignition	239	E
Brain Quest Grades 3 & 4	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Brain Quest Grades 5 & 6	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templar—The Director's Cut	N/A	Ubisoft	240	T
Call of Duty: World at War	N/A	Activision	236	T
Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	8.0	Konami	235	T
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity	5.0	Atari	238	E
Chrono Trigger	9.0	Square Enix	236	E10+
C.O.R.E.	5.5	Graffiti	242	M
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E
The Dark Spire	5.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Disgaea DS	7.5	NIS America	233	T
Dokapon Journey	4.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Don King Boxing	N/A	2K Sports	240	T
Dragon Ball: Origins	7.0	Atari	235	E
Dragon Quest IV: Chapters of the Chosen	7.5	Square Enix	233	E10+
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	8.5	Square Enix	239	E
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob Squarepants Edition	7.0	THQ	234	E
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	7.0	Konami	237	E
Emergency! Disaster Rescue Squad	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Exit DS	7.5	Square Enix	234	E
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	6.0	System 3	233	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.5	Square Enix	240	E10+
Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	8.5	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	6.0	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Gardening Mama	8.0	Majesco	240	E
Gauntlet	7.5	Eidos	236	T
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	N/A	Atari	243	E
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	9.0	Rockstar	241	M
Guitar Hero On Tour: Decades	7.0	Activision	237	E10+
Harvest Moon: Frantic Farming	8.0	Natsume	243	E
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	8.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	N/A	LucasArts	243	T
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	6.0	Aksys	242	T
Kirby Super Star Ultra	9.0	Nintendo	234	E
Knights in the Nightmare	8.0	Atlus	243	T
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II	7.5	Atlus	238	T
The Legend of Kage 2	8.0	Square Enix	234	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E
The Legendary Starfy	7.0	Nintendo	243	E
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.5	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
LEGO Battles	5.0	Warner Bros.	243	E
Line Rider 2: Unbound	6.0	Inxile	234	E
Little Red Riding Hood's Zombie BBQ	5.0	Destineer	235	T
Lock's Quest	7.0	THQ	234	E
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest	5.0	Electronic Arts	238	E10+
Luminous Arc 2	7.0	Atlus	236	T
Lux-Pain	4.0	Ignition	240	T
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E
Magician's Quest: Mysterious Times	7.5	Konami	242	E10+
Master of the Monster Lair	6.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Metal Slug 7	7.5	Ignition	236	T
Miami Law	3.0	Hudson	243	T
Monster Lab	8.0	Eidos	236	E10+
Moon	7.5	Mastiff	236	T
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	5.0	Gamecock	236	E
My DoItAll	N/A	Tomy	239	E
My World, My Way	7.0	Atlus	239	E
MySims Party	N/A	Electronic Arts	240	E
MySims Racing	N/A	Electronic Arts	243	E
Mystery Case Files: MillionHeir	6.5	Nintendo	234	E
Naruto: Path of the Ninja 2	6.5	Tomy	234	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	5.0	Tomy	243	E10+
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	6.0	Capcom	236	E
Ninjatown	8.0	SouthPeak	235	E
Peggle Dual Shot	8.5	PopCap	240	E
Personal Trainer: Cooking	N/A	Nintendo	237	E
Personal Trainer: Math	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
Personal Trainer: Walking	N/A	Nintendo	243	E
Pokémon Platinum Version	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Pokémon Ranger: Shadows of Almia	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Pop Cutie! Street Fashion Simulation	6.0	Koei	233	E
Populous	7.0	XSEED	234	T
Prey the Stars	5.5	Koei	234	E10
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	7.0	Ubisoft	237	E
Princess on Ice	N/A	Aksys	235	E
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	8.0	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Quantum of Solace	6.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Retro Game Challenge	8.0	XSEED	237	RP
Rhythm Heaven	9.0	Nintendo	241	E
Robocalypse	7.5	Tecmo	235	E10+
Rock Revolution	5.0	Konami	235	E10+
Roogoo Attack	4.0	SouthPeak	243	E
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	237	E
Shaun the Sheep	4.0	D3Publisher	235	E
Shaun White Snowboarding	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
Skate It	5.5	Electronic Arts	237	E
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	8.0	Sega	234	E
Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	8.0	Disney	235	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Spore Creatures	8.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	6.0	LucasArts	236	E
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	6.0	LucasArts	233	T
Steal Princess	6.0	Atlus	241	E10+
Suikoden: Tierkreis	7.0	Konami	240	E10+
Super Robot Taisen OG Saga: Endless Frontier	7.0	Atlus	241	T
Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	6.0	Tecmo	235	E
Theresia	N/A	Aksys	235	M
Time Hollow	7.0	Konami	234	T
Tokyo Beat Down	6.0	Atlus	240	T
Tom Clancy's EndWar	N/A	Ubisoft	236	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	N/A	Eidos	236	T
Tony Hawk's Motion	4.0	Activision	237	E
Tornado	6.0	Ignition	234	E
Touch Mechanic	5.0	Aspyr	241	E
TrackMania DS	7.0	Atlus	240	E
Transformers Animated: The Game	7.0	Activision	235	E
Unsolved Crimes	4.5	Empire	234	T
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	9.0	Square Enix	240	T
Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise	7.0	THQ	234	E
What's Cooking? Jamie Oliver	N/A	Atari	235	E
World Championship Games	N/A	The Game Factory	240	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	4.0	THQ	236	T
Zenses: Oceans	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zenses: Rainforest	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zubo	6.5	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

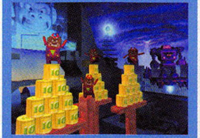


TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 10

I've been playing Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 so much that my shoulders are sore, but the game is so much fun that I still don't want to put down my Wii Remote. Should you decide to join me on these virtual links, do yourself a favor and pick up a Wii MotionPlus accessory. The game is still excellent without it, but that little add-on definitely takes things to the next level. **—STEVE T.**

ZUBO

While Zubo can become rather repetitive and is perhaps too simplistic overall, the RPG's charming style and fairly unique battle system make it worth checking out. **—JUSTIN C.**

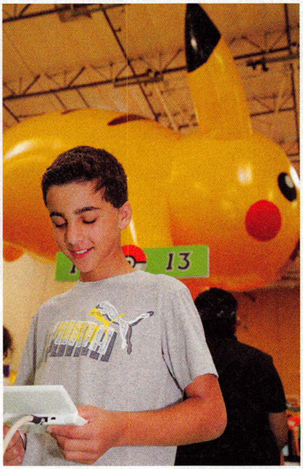


BOOM BLOX BASH PARTY

If it ain't broke, why rebuild it? Boom Blox Bash Party doesn't feel as fresh or innovative as its predecessor, but it retains everything that made the first game such a blast and gives us a lot more of it. Better still, the ability to share custom-made levels online means the party never has to end. Of course, we're too busy making the magazine to contribute our own levels, so we're counting on you to keep us entertained. Get to work! **—STEVE T.**

COMMUNITY

STAFF
STAFF



EVENT

Platinum Battles

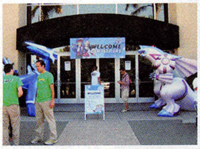
Destinies were fulfilled and champions were born at the second regional Pokémon video game tournament.

As the line of competitors formed at dawn outside of City Beach in Fremont, CA, we knew this year's tournament was going to be serious business. Our expectations were soon confirmed inside the packed event, with each brightly color-coded and Pokémon-plastered area overloading our eyes and cranking our Pokémon fever up to maximum.

Battles were fought via Pokémon Platinum Version's Pokémon Link Club Colosseum using the Double Cup rules, and no Pokémon were allowed to exceed Level 50 (no Tyranitar!).

We were pleased to see a wide variety of Pokémon battling, with every Type from Grass to Psychic in attendance. Smeargle was a particular favorite.

Although the air crackled with competition, Pokémon enthusiasts know the true meaning of sportsmanship, and all battles were won and lost graciously.



"That's cool for me to see," said J.C. Smith, Director of Marketing, The Pokémon Company International. "[Especially] parents being supportive of their kids. Even though they didn't win, the parents are still proud." Indeed, the amount of effort it takes just to train a tournament team is something to be proud of in itself. And to see fellow Trainers supporting each other despite the intensity of the competition was downright inspiring. Some of Smith's favorite moments are "seeing older kids help train the younger ones and teach them the ways, and help build that community of knowledge." All generations were definitely represented—we even saw some parents competing.

Finalists (who will move on to the National Championship in St. Louis, MO, on June 27) enjoyed a lavish VIP-style lounge after winning their battles, complete with huge beanbag chairs and plush Poké Ball-shaped pillows. Not all the spoils went to the victors though, as all registrants were able to obtain a super-exclusive Shiny Milotic distribution.

If you missed out on the tournament, don't worry—you can still witness the action firsthand. To see a video of the winning Senior-division battle (congratulations to 19-year-old Huy from Fremont), enter video code 71-58349-74950 in the Video Battles area on the third floor of the Global Terminal in Pokémon Platinum Version. Perhaps watching these true champions battle will inspire you to create a winning strategy of your own. It's never too early to start training for next year!

—CAROLYN G.

FINALISTS LOUNGE
Pokémon Video Game Championship Series

[Left] Only the finalists were allowed to rest in the swanky lounge. Check out those Poké Ball pillows!

FANDOM

Spirited Arrangements

Fans of Namco Bandai's Tales franchise collaborate on an ambitious free album.

For nearly a decade, the OverClocked ReMix online community has provided a home for fan-made interpretations of video game music, offering free downloads of more than 1,500 homemade tracks. Since 2003, the community of composers and arrangers has come together to release a dozen complete game-specific albums of arrangements, including those based on Super Metroid, Kirby's Adventure, and Sonic the Hedgehog 2.

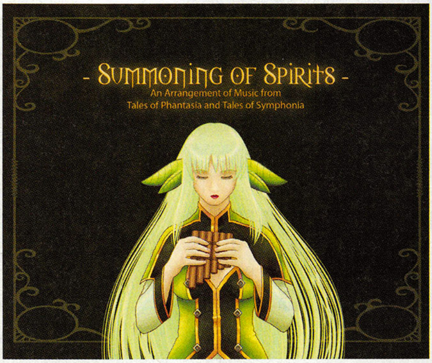
For its 13th album, the OCR arrangers chose to cover familiar ground for fans of role-playing on Nintendo platforms: Namco's Tales franchise, particularly Tales of Phantasia (for Game Boy Advance) and the Tales of Symphonia games (for GameCube and Wii). Project directors Kyle Crouse and Aleah Baker started the project in 2005 after noting a lack of awareness in the fan remix scene for the original works. "I think the gaming community has been gradually becoming more aware of the series, but we wanted to give it a little push, especially among the remixing community," says Baker. Adds Crouse, "We wanted to pay tribute to [main composers Motoi Sakuraba and Shinji Tamura], as well as to the Tales series as a whole, by creating this album."

The final album, *Summoning of Spirits: An Arrangement of Music from Tales of Phantasia and Tales of Symphonia*, was released via the OverClocked ReMix website in March, offering 53 reimagined tracks—all for free download. Crouse says they initially intended to limit the album to 35 tracks, but as the project picked up steam—and sequel Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World was released on Wii—they decided to accommodate the additional arrangements.

Some remixed tracks offer fuller-sounding orchestral renditions of the original in-game songs, but the lengthy album throws in several curveballs, such as metal guitars in the album opener "The Unholy Wars," thumping disco beats in "Desert Nights," and tribal drums in "The Koan of Drums" (arranged by OCR founder David Lloyd). The arrangements seem as diverse as their creators, as more than 35 artists contributed to the tracks; many of the songs are credited to multiple arrangers. "The staff was overall incredibly supportive of each other, offering lots of feedback and general assistance," explains Baker. "We have a lot of tracks that were the results of artists collaborating with each other, recording live instruments, or aiding in sequencing."

For more on Summoning of Spirits, including single-track and complete-album downloads, head over to http://tales.ocremix.org.

—ANDREW H.


- Summoning of Spirits -
An Arrangement of Music from
Tales of Phantasia and Tales of Symphonia

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

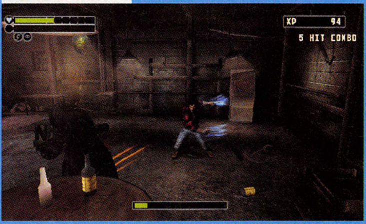
Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

Based on the number of responses we got, *a lot* of readers are enjoying Rhythm Heaven. Seriously, we were inundated by captions—check out some of the better ones below. This month, we've got a special celebrity guest joining us all the way from Canada. Say "eh" and send your best captions to **screentest@nintendopower.com.**

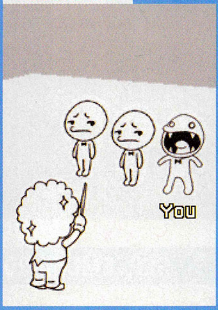
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



Wolverine is the best there is at what he does, and what he does is put the "C" in "YMCA."

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 242'S SHOT



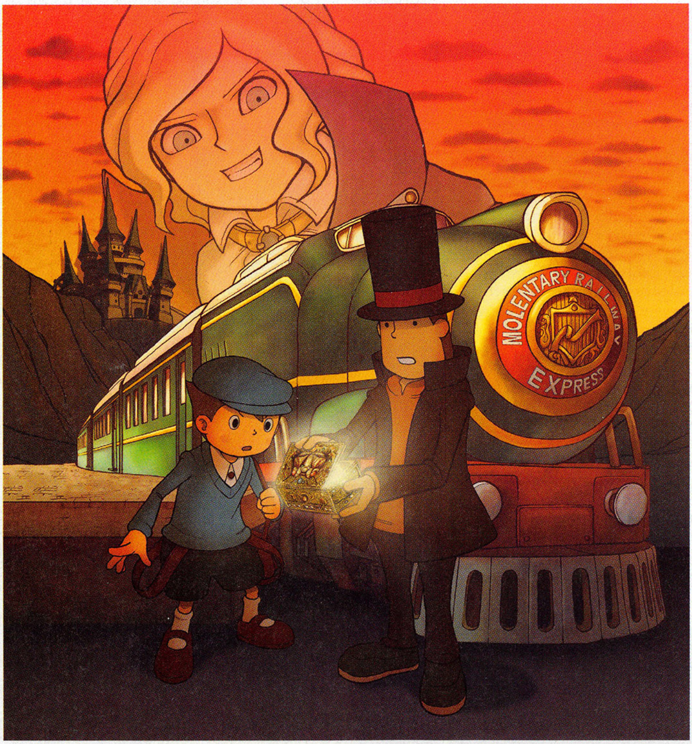
"I told you never to look our new chorus teacher directly in the eyes!"
—BRIAN B.

"Unfortunately, the Glee Club never took off, as the third member was suffering eye inflation and jaw paralysis."
—NACHOGRANDE96

"How many times do I have to say it? My name is not You—it's Mike, you idiots!"
—BRANDON P.

"All was well until he realized that he was trapped inside a DS screen." —KEVIN G.

In the wake of this year's fantastic E3, we'll take a closer look at some of the big Wii and DS titles slated for the rest of 2009. That includes an in-depth investigation of the long-awaited Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box. We'll also review Wii Sports Resort and maybe even unveil a couple of cool surprises. Not every cat was let out of the bag at E3....



SEPTEMBER 2009 • VOL. 245

NEXT MONTH

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TEEN
T
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Mild Language
Violence

Wii™

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